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HISTORY of WAR



**ARCTIC
CONVOYS**
UNSUNG HEROES OF
THE ALLIED LIFELINE

LAST HUNT OF THE FALLSCHIRMJÄGER

HITLER'S AIRBORNE ELITE

BUNKER ASSAULTS ★ INVASION OF CRETE ★ DEFENDING THE REICH



BATTLE OF SOLFERINO

DISCOVER THE BLOODY BATTLEFIELD
ORIGINS OF THE RED CROSS

Future

ISSUE 037

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TO HIGH-SEAS MENACE



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UNCOVER THE SECRET TACTIC THAT
WON THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC



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World War II



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Welcome

“The most precious thing in the presence of the foe is ammunition. He who shoots uselessly, merely to comfort himself, is a man of straw who merits not the title of Fallschirmjäger”

– Ten commandments of the German paratrooper

During a conflict that was largely fought by civilian volunteers and conscripts, highly trained, determined and professional soldiers had the capacity to make a huge impact on a campaign or battlefield.

Germany's elite paratroopers, the Fallschirmjäger, are counted among WWII's most professional and devastating units. Just one of the paratroopers' 'Ten Commandments' gives a sense of the practical training and mental conditioning that must have given these men an edge, whatever they faced in combat.

From the storming of Belgian bunkers, to the invasion of

Crete, to the die-hard defence at Monte Cassino, these often ruthless soldiers left a huge impression on their enemies.



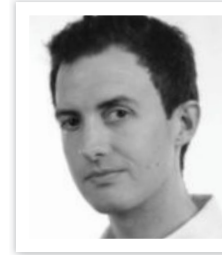
Tim Williamson
Editor



EMAIL

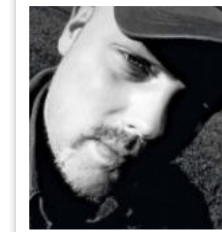
frontline@futurenet.com

CONTRIBUTORS



TOM GARNER

Tom was privileged to speak to two veterans this month, both of whom took part in the perilous Arctic Convoys of WWII (page 56). He also delved into the complex histories of the Peninsula War (page 14) and Rupert of the Rhine (page 48).



ROBIN SCHÄFER

Back with another in-depth feature on German military history, this issue Rob dives into a favourite topic of his: the Green Devils, or Fallschirmjäger. On page 28 he explores the harsh training and daring missions of these elite troops.



DAVID SMITH

One of the most important battles in Italian History, Solferino also served as the grisly inspiration for the Red Cross. David takes a look at how the battle unfolded to not only define modern Italy, but an institution that is now recognised globally (p.40).

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German paratroopers in the Inner Court of The Hague's Binnenhof, shortly after occupying the city



28 Uncover the training and tactics behind Germany's professional and ruthless fighting force

LAST HUNT OF THE FALLSCHIRMJÄGER

HITLER'S AIRBORNE ELITE

Frontline

14 **Peninsular War**

The long struggle for Spain and Portugal featured some of the war's most iconic battles and sieges

16 **Hotspots of the Peninsula**

From across the French border, right into Portugal, this theatre impacted the entire Iberian territory

18 **British Army equipment**

Some of the best trained infantry in the field at the time carried a practical array of gear

20 **Famous Battles: Salamanca**

Take a look inside Wellington's astonishing victory

22 **Head to Head**

French regulars had to contend with Spain's cunning and unrelenting guerrilla fighters

24 **Peninsular atrocities**

Massacres and devastation were a tragic feature of the war, committed by both sides

26 **Heroes and commanders**

Men from all over Europe found their calling during the conflict and many made their name in this time

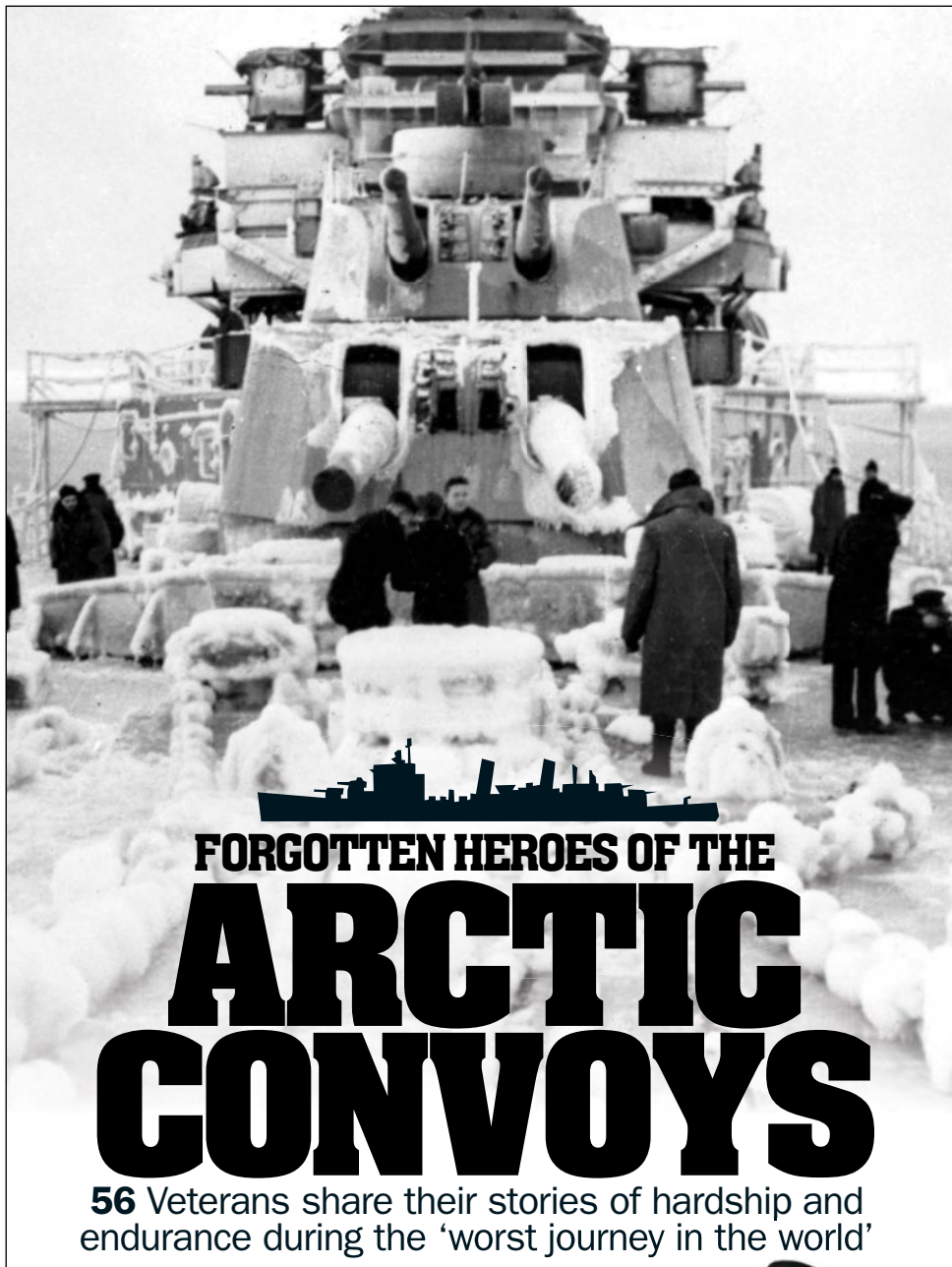
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76 Never miss an issue, get your **History of War** before it's in the shops and save a bundle while you're at it

SOLFERINO

40 Discover the bloody battle that saw the founding of modern Italy





06 WAR IN FOCUS

Stunning imagery from throughout history

28 Hitler's airborne elite

Germany's professional paratrooper regiment was a force to be reckoned with

40 GREAT BATTLES Solferino

Step onto the battlefield that gave birth to modern Italy and the Red Cross

48 Rupert of the Rhine

Read the story of the man who went from a Civil War hero to a high seas menace

56 Arctic convoys

Veterans share their experiences of the treacherous route to supply Russia in WWII

66 MEDAL OF HONOR HEROES Alonzo Cushing

This young Union officer stood his ground against the infamous Pickett's charge

70 BRIEFING Ethiopia's civil war

Uncover the origins of the tragic conflicts blighting the jewel of Africa

78 OPERATOR'S HANDBOOK Westland Wessex

This Cold War stalwart was at the heart of British military operations for decades

84 Wind talkers

In the fight for the Pacific, the USA has turned to its Native tribes for help

92 Reviews

A look at the latest military history titles awaiting you on the shelves

98 ARTEFACT OF WAR WWI Christmas tin

This modest metal box was a welcome holiday treat for the men in the trenches





WAR_{in} FOCUS

HAKKAA PÄÄLLE!

Taken: c.1938

Finnish cavalry charge with sabres drawn during a training exercise. During the Winter War, these troops were mainly used for reconnaissance, though their war cry, "Hakkaa päälle," translated as 'cut them down' was still often heard around the conflict's frozen battlefields. The phrase was first used during the Thirty Years' War.







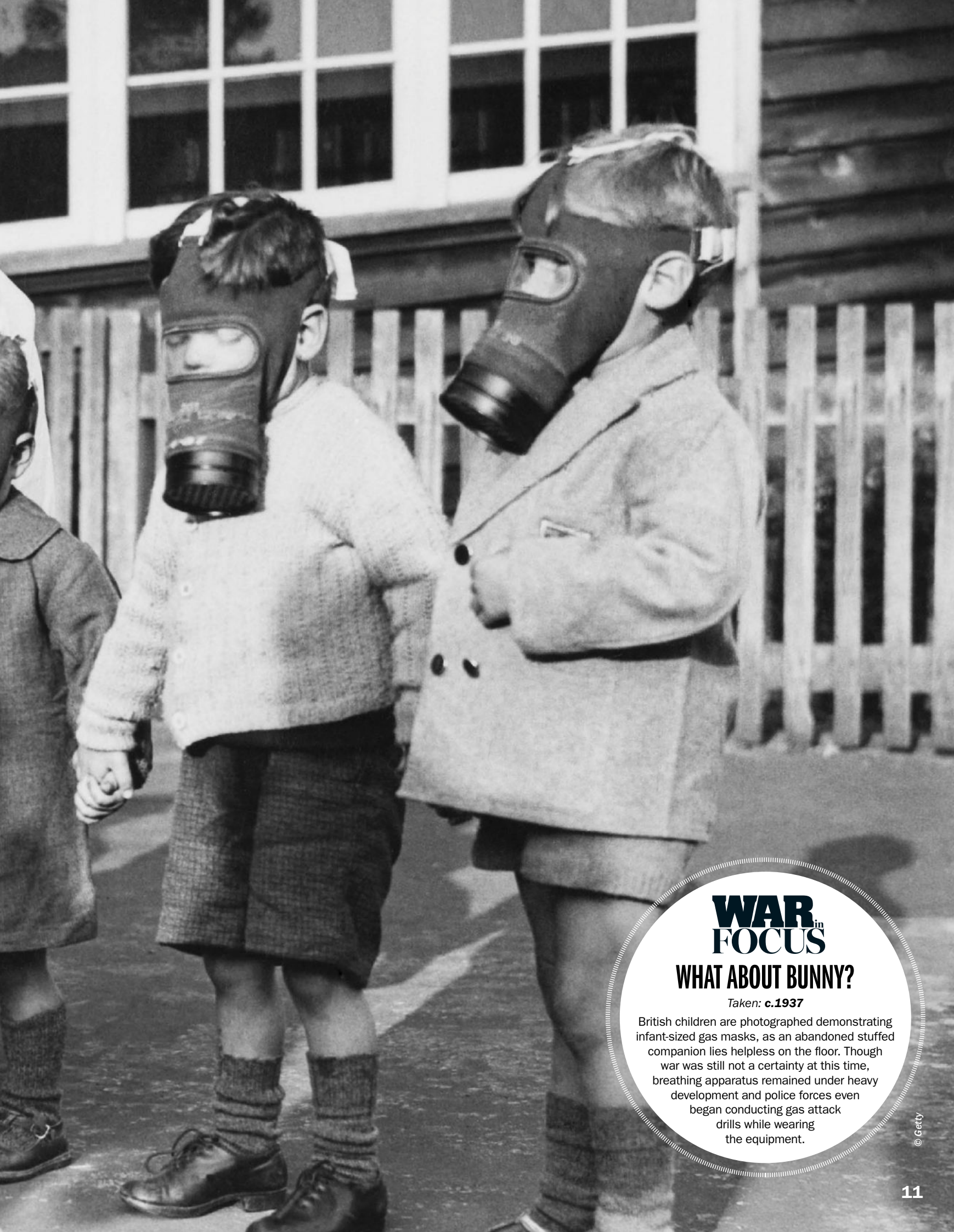
WAR_{in} **FOCUS**

THE DEATH OF GENERAL WARREN...

Painted: c.1815-31

John Trumbull's famous painting depicts the moment British troops overwhelmed American Rebels at the Battle of Bunker Hill, 17 June, 1775. Joseph Warren had also fought at the Battles of Lexington and Concord just months before his death.





WAR_{in} **FOCUS**

WHAT ABOUT BUNNY?

Taken: c.1937

British children are photographed demonstrating infant-sized gas masks, as an abandoned stuffed companion lies helpless on the floor. Though war was still not a certainty at this time, breathing apparatus remained under heavy development and police forces even began conducting gas attack drills while wearing the equipment.



WAR
in
FOCUS
REACHING OUT

Taken: c.1966

In this iconic photograph, wounded gunnery Sergeant Jeremiah Purdie is seen being helped to an aid station close by at Hill 484. War photographer Larry Burrows captured the shot while Marines were locked in an ongoing struggle with NVA troops for control of the hill in the northern region of South Vietnam, close to the DMZ.



TIMELINE OF THE...

PENINSULAR WAR 1807-14

The occupation of the Iberian Peninsula provoked fierce resistance and saw significant British intervention that drained French resources to breaking point

In a painting by Francisco Goya, French Imperial Mamelukes charge rioting citizens in Madrid on 2 May 1808. This suppression began the Peninsular War

DOS DE MAYO UPRISING

The French occupied Madrid in March 1808 and deposed the Spanish royal family, replacing them with Joseph Bonaparte (Napoleon's brother) as king. A popular uprising in Madrid was brutally suppressed with hundreds being executed, prompting a wider revolution.

May 1808

1807

FRENCH INVASION OF PORTUGAL

On 18 October 1807, more than 100,000 French troops crossed the Spanish frontier and on 30 November, General Junot occupied Lisbon without bloodshed. The French were stationed in Spain where they uneasily co-existed with their then Spanish allies.

Left: The Portuguese royal family were forced to flee to Brazil in the wake of the French occupation of Lisbon



July 1808-January 1809

FRENCH ESCALATION

Following a Spanish victory at Bailén in July 1808, Napoleon personally intervened with 200,000 veteran troops. His armies forced the small British force under Sir John Moore to evacuate Spain by sea. Moore was killed at Corunna but his army was saved.



August 1808

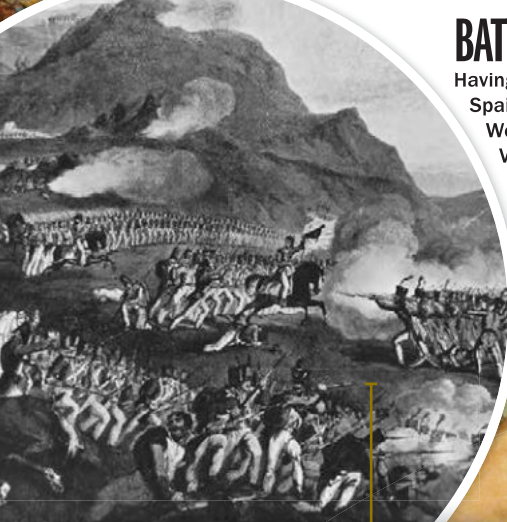
BATTLE OF VIMEIRO

An Anglo-Portuguese army under General Arthur Wellesley defeated Junot at Vimeiro, forcing the French to evacuate Portugal by agreement. However, Wellesley was accused of letting the French escape and was temporarily replaced.



Left: The Battle of Vimeiro was the first occasion where Napoleonic offensive tactics failed against British infantry line defences

Left: The French were forced to surrender almost 18,000 men after the Battle of Bailén. This decisive Spanish victory ironically led to the French occupying Spain in huge numbers



BATTLE OF BUÇACO

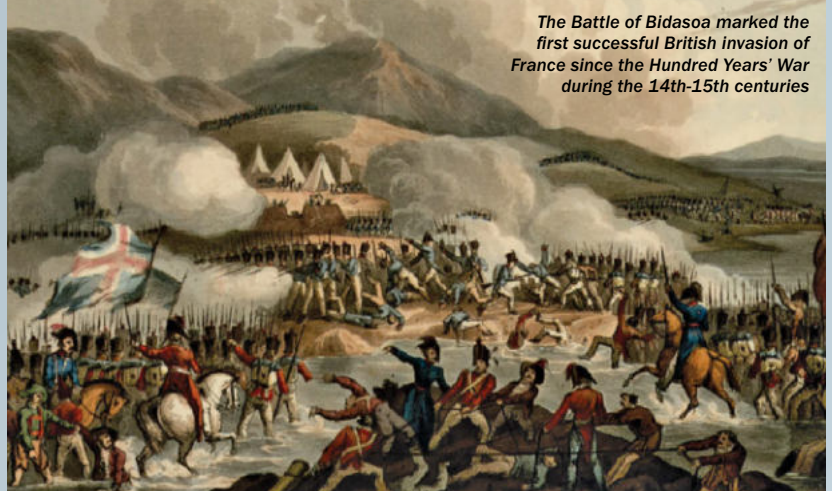
Having struggled to re-enter Spain, the reinstated Wellesley (now known as Viscount Wellington) fights a tough but victorious battle at Buçaco against Marshal Masséna. The clash is famous for the role of the reconstituted Portuguese Army in the victory.

Left: The important Portuguese contribution at Buçaco emphasised that the Peninsular War was a truly allied fight against the French



BATTLE OF VITORIA

Wellington defeated Joseph Bonaparte at Vitoria after marching 121,000 British, Spanish and Portuguese troops from northern Portugal. The battle marked the collapse of Napoleonic rule in Spain.



The Battle of Bidasoa marked the first successful British invasion of France since the Hundred Years' War during the 14th-15th centuries

WELLINGTON INVADES FRANCE

After Vitoria, Wellington fought a hard campaign to enter southern France with his army across the River Bidasoa. There was fierce fighting at Vera but the Allies crossed the river on 7 October 1813

September 1810

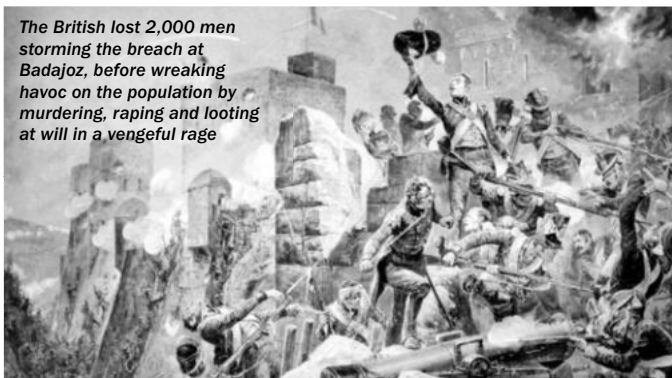
January-April 1812

June 1813

October 1813

April 1814

The British lost 2,000 men storming the breach at Badajoz, before wreaking havoc on the population by murdering, raping and looting at will in a vengeful rage



SIEGES OF CIUDAD RODRIGO AND BADAJOZ

These fortresses on the Spanish-Portuguese border had to be overcome for Wellington to advance into Spain. However, they proved hard to capture and the British lost thousands of men taking them, particularly at Badajoz.

BATTLE OF TOULOUSE

The last major battle of the Peninsular War was fought in France over the southern city of Toulouse. Napoleon had abdicated four days previously, rendering the battle somewhat pointless.

The French defended Toulouse with 42,000 men while Wellington's victorious army had around 50,000 troops, a fifth of which were Spanish



Images: Alamy

HOTSPOTS

OF THE

PENINSULA

1807-14

The fight for Iberia was an intense struggle, fought across three countries and contained a myriad of bloody battles and sieges

1 BATTLE OF VIMEIRO

VIMEIRO, PORTUGAL 21 AUGUST 1808

General Junot attacks Wellington's army in a classic French column formation. The British, fighting in lines, beat off Junot's troops who lose 2,000 men and 13 cannon.

2 SECOND SIEGE OF ZARAGOZA

ZARAGOZA, SPAIN 20 DECEMBER 1808 - 20 FEBRUARY 1809

The French capture the city from the Spanish in a bloody battle that becomes noted for its brutality. An estimated 54,000 Spaniards, both soldiers and civilians, are killed through disease and street fighting.

3 BATTLE OF TALAVERA

TALAVERA, SPAIN 27-28 JULY 1809

Wellington commands 55,000 men, but 35,000 are uncooperative Spaniards who largely flee in front of a French force of 46,000. The British take the brunt of the fighting and the French are eventually defeated by artillery fire.

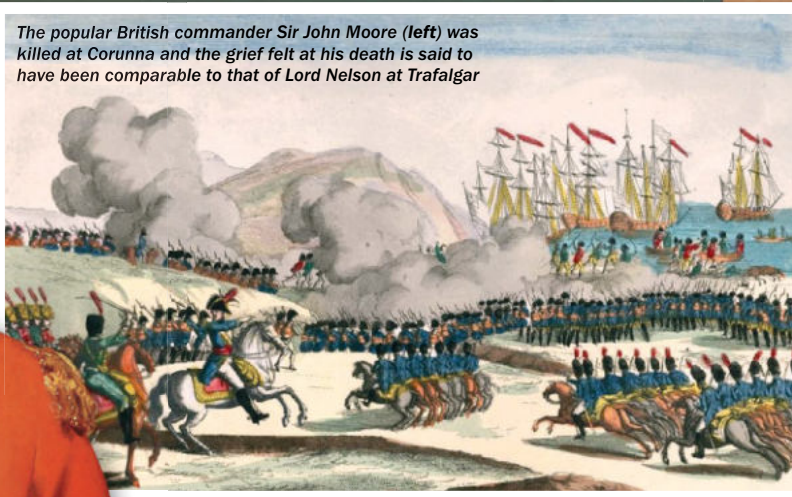
4 BATTLE OF CORUNNA

CORUNNA, SPAIN 16 JANUARY 1809

Arguably a Napoleonic Dunkirk, Corunna is a successful naval evacuation of some 27,000 British troops from Spain. Hotly pursued by a numerically superior French army, the victorious defensive battle secures a British escape.



The popular British commander Sir John Moore (left) was killed at Corunna and the grief felt at his death is said to have been comparable to that of Lord Nelson at Trafalgar



4

BATTLE OF BUÇACO

27 SEPTEMBER 1810 BUSSACO, PORTUGAL

SIEGE OF ALMEIDA

25 JULY - 27 AUGUST 1810 ALMEIDA, PORTUGAL

6

BATTLE OF SALAMANCA

22 JULY 1812 SALAMANCA, SPAIN

3

BATTLE OF FUENTES DE OÑORO

3-5 MAY 1811 FUENTES DE OÑORO, SPAIN

1

FRENCH OCCUPATION OF LISBON

30 NOVEMBER 1807 LISBON, PORTUGAL

BATTLE OF ALBUERA

16 MAY 1811 ALBUERA, SPAIN

5

SIEGE OF BADAJOZ

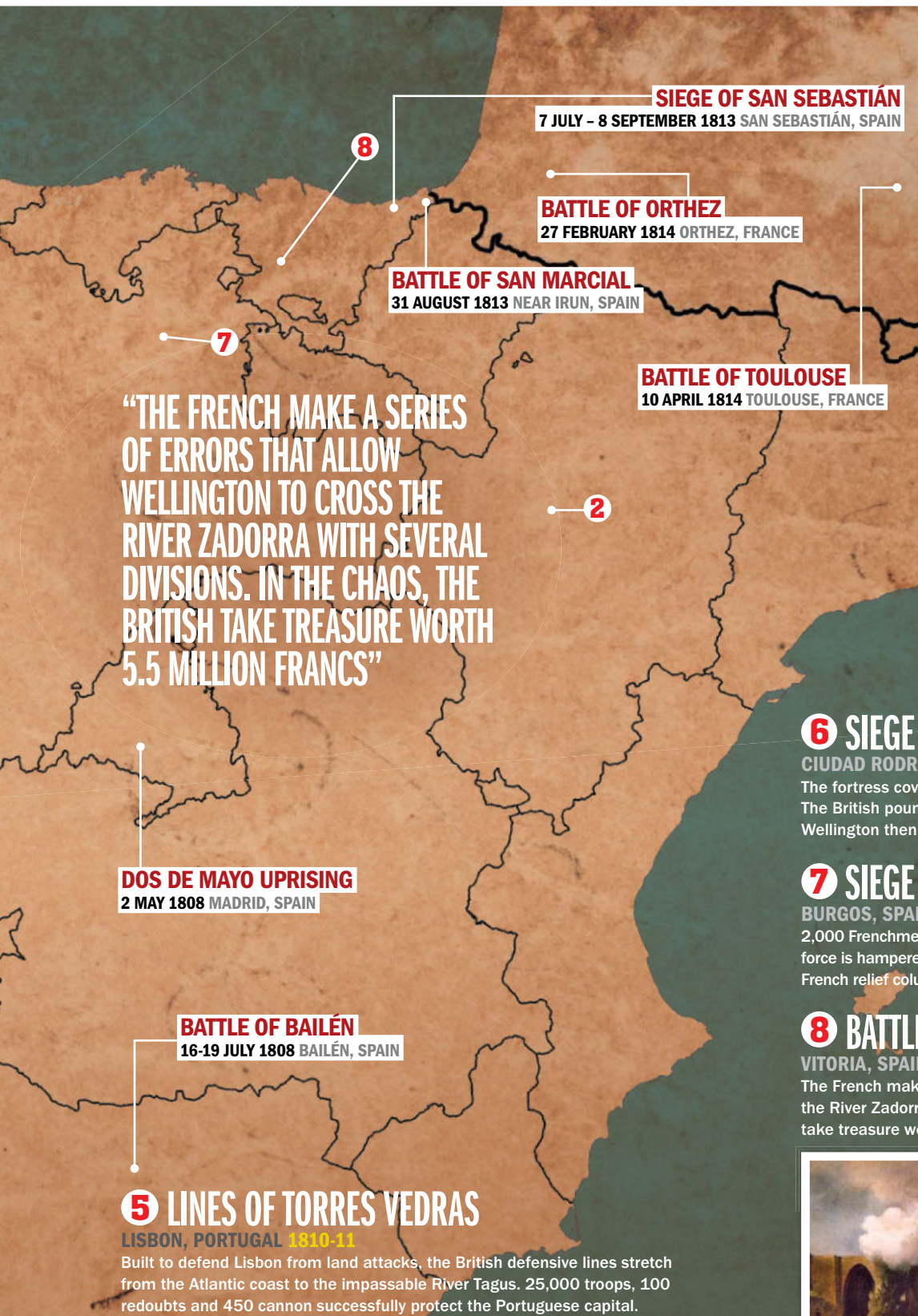
16 MARCH - 6 APRIL 1812 BADAJOZ, SPAIN

SIEGE OF CÁDIZ

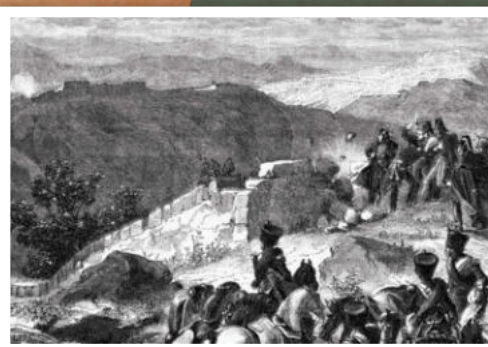
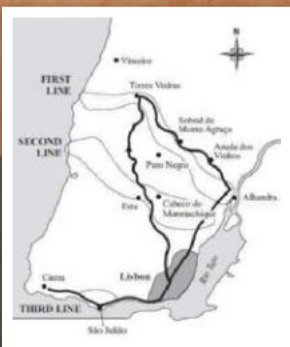
5 FEBRUARY 1810 - 24 AUGUST 1812 CÁDIZ, SPAIN

BATTLE OF BAROSSA

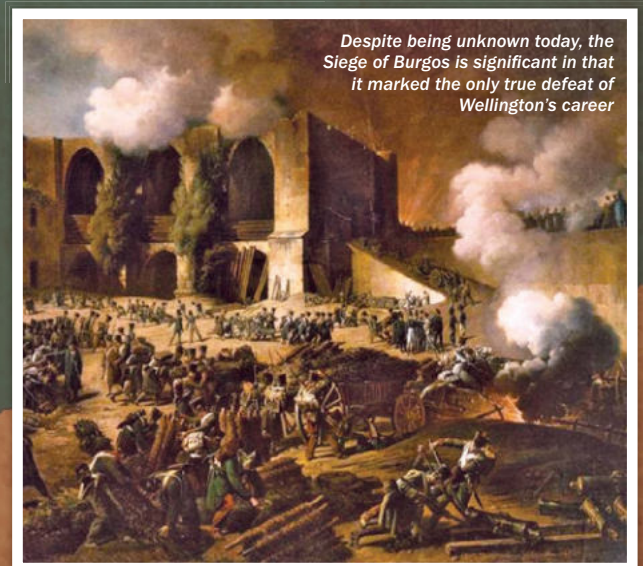
5 MARCH 1811 PLAYA DE BAROSSA, SPAIN



Above: Colin Campbell leading a 'forlorn hope' at the Siege of San Sebastián. Then aged 21, Campbell later became a field marshal



Left: Marshal Masséna before the lines. The French realised they were impenetrable and Portugal was saved from invasion



Despite being unknown today, the Siege of Burgos is significant in that it marked the only true defeat of Wellington's career

BRITISH ARMY EQUIPMENT

Between 1808-14, British soldiers were laden with a wide range of weapons and equipment that enabled them to perform their duties to deadly effect

During the Peninsular War, the British soldier had much to contend with: fighting the French, rampant disease and the harsh rigours of the Iberian climate. In order to help him cope and survive, he was given weapons and equipment that would seem highly impracticable, heavy and cumbersome today. Nonetheless, their individual virtues all helped to secure victory in the Peninsula, although the soldier would have considered himself lucky not to receive wounds that required surgery.

BROWN BESS MUSKET

A 'Brown Bess' was the standard weapon for a British infantryman. Between 1793-1815, around 3 million were produced and variants of the musket had been in use since the early 1740s. This particular model is known as the 'India Pattern', which was cheap and simple to manufacture.

'FLASH IN THE PAN'

The flintlock mechanism had a 'swan neck' design, with the cocking device set in the right side of the gun body. When triggered this ignited the gunpowder in the open pan.

CHAMBER

The Brown Bess was a large firearm and its firing chamber reflected its size. They had to be designed to hold a .705 or .72 calibre ball. For their day these were huge cartridges.

BARREL

With a 99-centimetre barrel, the 'India Pattern' was 7.5 centimetres shorter than previous models but its calibre was 1.9 centimetres. This meant the musket could be loaded with captured enemy ammunition.

INFANTRY HAVERSACK

This practical rucksack carried all of the soldier's essential needs such as clothes and toiletries. Soldiers had to carry the standard clothing ration of shirts, stockings, one pair of shoes, spare soles and heels, trousers, a greatcoat and sleeping blanket.

Washing equipment included brushes, soap, razors and a mess tin.

DRINKING CANTEEN

An essential part of a soldier's kit was his canteen of drinking water. Known as an 'Italian' canteen, more than 200,000 were manufactured between 1793-1803 and they primarily made out of wood or tin. Each one was painted blue and came with a 1.7-metre-long leather strap.

Below: Canteens were sometimes given regimental markings and the wooden design continued to be used by the British Army until 1871

Right: A full haversack could weigh up to 36 kilograms and its relatively compact size meant that the average soldier did not have much room for personal items

Below: This type of pistol was used by the King's German Legion, a Hanoverian regiment that fought in the British Army

FLINTLOCK PISTOL

All British cavalrymen were required to carry pistols, even though they had an extremely short range and were highly inaccurate. If a pistol were loaded with too much gunpowder, it was liable to blow itself out of the wielder's hand when fired.

CAMP KETTLE

Life for soldiers was undoubtedly hard but a few could afford some home comforts. Hot food and drinks were important on arduous campaigns and this kettle had an in-built spirit lamp to boil water. Its complex design suggests that it would have belonged to an officer.

Right: Tin kettles were introduced during the Peninsular War to replace iron ones. This lightened the kettle's weight and reduced boiling and cooking time



"IF A PISTOL WERE LOADED WITH TOO MUCH GUNPOWDER, IT WAS LIABLE TO BLOW ITSELF OUT OF THE WIELDER'S HAND WHEN FIRED"

RAMROD

The ramrod was a key accessory that was in loops under the barrel. Made of steel, these rods were used to force cartridge balls and paper down the barrel before firing.

SURGEON'S AMPUTATION FIELD KIT

A surgeon's kit resembled a handiwork toolbox more than a set of medical equipment. It was usually used in a field hospital and the instruments were used for wound care, amputation and trepanning the skull. During operations there were no anaesthetics or antisepsis used.



Left: The hardwood case featured a felt lining within, to protect the instruments, which were themselves made of steel with rosewood, ebony or bone handles

Images: Alamy, Getty

BATTLE OF SALAMANCA

Wellington was confirmed as a military genius on 22 July 1812 with this decisive victory that signalled the end of French domination in Spain

In early 1812, Wellington captured the French strongholds of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz near the Spanish-Portuguese border. He advanced his allied British, Spanish and Portuguese armies of 49,000 men into Spain and made for Madrid. Confronting him were 50,000 French troops commanded by Marshal Marmont.

Wellington held the advantage as Marmont's forces were strung out in an arc stretching from Oviedo in the north, to Avila near Madrid. In the middle of this arc was the city of Salamanca. From 17 June 1812, the two armies shadowed each other warily around the city for a month. Finally on 22 July, Marmont attempted to outflank Wellington but overstretched his forces. Upon hearing this Wellington declared, "Marmont is lost" and rode to battle.

"MY GOD! I NEVER SAW ANYTHING SO BEAUTIFUL IN ALL MY LIFE. THE DAY IS YOURS"

1. THE FRENCH COMMANDER IS SLAIN

Marshal Marmont realises he has overextended the left of his army but is severely wounded by a howitzer shell before he can alert General Thomières, who commands the left flank. General Bonnet replaces Marmont.

2. PAKENHAM ATTACKS THOMIÈRES

Wellington's brother-in-law, Adjutant-General Pakenham is ordered to attack Thomières with the 3rd Division of British infantry. Despite heavy fire from the French, Pakenham smashes through Thomières's men inflicting heavy casualties, including Thomières himself who is killed.

3. THE HEAVY CAVALRY CHARGE

General Maucune's division is attacked. He orders his infantrymen to form squares. This is a costly mistake as they are destroyed by British line infantry and a cavalry charge led by Major General Le Marchant. However, Le Marchant is mortally wounded.



4. WELLINGTON CAN SENSE A VICTORY

Le Marchant's dragoons crush eight French battalions with sabres. The entire left flank is destroyed. Wellington exclaims to his chief of cavalry, "My God! I never saw anything so beautiful in all my life. The day is yours!"

Left: Marmont was forced to retire to France after the battle to recover his strength

5. ATTACKING THE FRENCH CENTRE

Major General Cole's 4th Division and General Pack's Portuguese brigade are repulsed trying to take the Greater Arapile hill where the French centre, led by General Bonnet, is positioned. 40 gun batteries firing on the hill assist the French.

6. CLAUSEL FIGHTS BACK

Bonnet is severely wounded and is replaced by General Clausel who orders a counterattack against Cole. However, Wellington commits his reserves of 5,500 men under Major General Clinton's 6th Division. Meanwhile, Marshal Beresford leads his Portuguese brigade against Clausel's left flank.

7. FIGHTING AT DUSK

As night falls, Clausel is pushed back. Major-General Campbell's 1st Division captures the Greater Arapile and Wellington throws the fresh 12th Light Dragoons into battle to pursue the retreating French.

8. FERREY'S LAST STAND

Covering the retreat, General Ferrey forms his right-flank division into a single line. Clinton's 6th Division is initially repulsed but Wellington orders his artillery to crossfire through the centre of Ferrey's line. Ferrey is killed and his division is broken.

9. FLIGHT TO ALBA DE TORMES

The French retreat across a bridge at Alba de Tormes in disorder. The Spanish battalion guarding the crossings have left their positions without informing Wellington and the remnants of Marmont's army are able to escape. This greatly angers Wellington.

10. A SWIFT VICTORY

In only four hours, the French forces have lost more than 14,000 men to just more than 5,000 allied casualties. It is a remarkable success for Wellington who remarks, "I never saw an army get such a beating in so short a time."

THE IMPACT OF SALAMANCA

Right: Adjutant General Edward Pakenham's Three Division clashes with the French under General Thomières. Salamanca was a great shock to the Napoleonic Empire

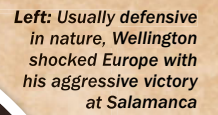
WELLINGTON HAD ACHIEVED ONE OF HIS GREATEST MILITARY SUCCESSES AND THE VICTORY RESONATED FAR BEYOND THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

For the first time in his career, the usually cautious Wellington had won a decisive victory at Salamanca by taking the offensive. This marked him out as a true rival to Napoleon. Indeed, the French General Foy wrote that Salamanca rose Wellington's reputation "almost to the level of Marlborough" and was "a battle in the style of Frederick the Great."

After the battle, Wellington was able to enter Madrid on 6 August, although he was forced to retreat to Portugal in the autumn. Nonetheless, from that point on the French were reluctant to take the offensive against the allied armies in Spain and this, combined with a



severe loss in manpower and resources, led to their ultimate expulsion from the Peninsula. Salamanca also had a propaganda impact across Europe and gave heart to those who were committed to defeating the French Empire. When Napoleon heard about the defeat on 2 September 1812, during his invasion of Russia, one of his generals noticed that "anxiety was clearly visible on his usually serene brow." This was five days before the apocalyptic Battle of Borodino and the news of Wellington's victory can have done nothing for the already severely depleted morale of the Grande Armée.



HEAD TO HEAD

The Peninsular War popularised the term 'guerrilla' (Spanish for 'little war') and these insurgents fought a grimly effective struggle against French occupiers

LINE INFANTRYMAN

LOYALTY: FRENCH EMPIRE YEARS IN OPERATION: 1808-14

FIREARM

Imperial soldiers carried Model 1777 'Charleville' muskets. Unlike other European muskets, the Charleville could be easily taken apart and be thoroughly cleaned, a capability that increased its efficiency and reliability.

UNIFORM

Napoleon's troops wore famously elaborate uniforms for identification and to emphasise the glory of France. However, they were largely impractical and made soldiers easy targets for their opponents.

TACTICS

The guerrillas pinned down 250,000 troops and so enormous numbers of men were required to simply protect messengers, escort supply trains and hold territory. Communications were also greatly hampered and movements were slow.

DISCIPLINE

Guerrilla warfare disheartened Imperial troops because of the great danger combined with little glory. Fearful soldiers became undisciplined and their frustration frequently resulted in desertion or vengeful attacks on the Spanish population.

TOTAL

A DEPLORABLE OCCUPATION

The French response to the increasing insurgency in Spain was discreditable. In 1810, Napoleon created six military governments in the country and gave the governors power to collect taxes in order to make the Spanish support the war effort with their own money. This act was, naturally, highly unpopular and each governor effectively became a provincial autocrat, which made co-ordinated efforts against the growing numbers of guerrillas difficult.

Winning 'hearts and minds' was also no concern to the occupying French. The Imperial troops lived off the land and officers habitually ransomed prisoners, seized property and used extortion to get what they wanted. This behaviour greatly contributed to the widespread guerrilla uprisings against them.

Right: The French occupation of Spain was heavy-handed and immediately unpopular with violence committed on both sides for years





Far left: A depiction of Catalan guerrillas. Armed Spanish men and women fought a brutal but effective war, causing the death and disappearance of tens of thousands of Napoleon's soldiers



THE BATTLE OF ARLABÁN

One of the Spanish guerrillas' most famous ambushes took place on 25 May 1811. Between 3,000-4,500 guerrillas hid in undergrowth for four hours in a mountain pass in the Basque Country, while a large French convoy drove past on the road below them. This convoy consisted of 150 carriages, 1,050 prisoners (most of them British) and an escort of 1,600 French soldiers. The guerrillas attacked the central part of the convoy and were assisted by the British prisoners in overpowering the soldiers. The prisoners were released and the Spanish captured all manner of supplies and weapons. The convoy was reckoned to be valued in the millions.

SPANISH GUERRILLA

LOYALTY: KINGDOM OF SPAIN YEARS IN OPERATION: 1808-14

FIREARM

Guerrillas were usually armed with the Spanish Army Model 1752 Musket. It was a conventional weapon used in many armies and was reliable enough to remain in wide circulation until the 1850s.

UNIFORM

Fighters wore a blend of civilian and military clothing, depending on the unit they fought in. Some guerrilla soldiers deliberately dressed like civilians to decrease visibility while others wore uniforms, so as to better display their military credentials.

TACTICS

The guerrillas ambushed convoys and columns and attacked encampments. They were a dangerous 'invisible' army that moved quickly and used their intricate knowledge of the harsh landscape with great success.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline was a loose concept; guerrilla bands consisted of fluctuating numbers of soldiers, peasants and even criminals such as deserters, bandits and smugglers. Nonetheless, they were highly effective, especially when they were aided by local civilians.

TOTAL



"SOME GUERRILLAS DELIBERATELY DRESSED LIKE CIVILIANS TO DECREASE VISIBILITY"

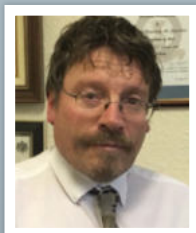


Illustrations: Jean-Michel Girard / The Art Agency

PENINSULAR ATROCITIES



Professor Charles Esdaile of the University of Liverpool discusses the extent to which the brutal nature of the conflict in Spain is deserved



Professor Charles Esdaile of the University of Liverpool

ATROCITIES AGAINST SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A FACTOR IN WARFARE, BUT WHAT MADE THE PENINSULAR WAR PARTICULARLY VICIOUS?

The war was by no means as vicious a conflict as has often been claimed. At the

very beginning, it is true that angry and terrified peasants massacred inmates of French hospitals, together with various isolated parties of French soldiers who fell into their hands.

These massacres are, alas, a fact, but both at the time and since, the details were wildly exaggerated. For example, a French brigade commander was supposed to have been sawn in half and other men killed by being thrown into cauldrons of boiling oil. In reality, the victims were simply clubbed or hacked to death.

Thereafter, large-scale incidents of this sort were pretty rare. The only Spaniards who consistently engaged in torture were gangs of bandits who infested the countryside. This was not because of hatred for the French and their supporters per se, but because torture had long been an important bonding ritual among bandits. In reality, even the Spanish guerrillas were prepared to take prisoners, not least because many of the men could be coerced to join their forces.

Nevertheless, the occupying forces came to believe wild stories and this led them to deploy a widespread use of terror of a sort that they had not had much call to use elsewhere in Europe. They also had a consistent tendency to 'other' the Spaniards and see them as primitive savages. Combine this with the sheer misery of campaigning in Spain and the contempt that French soldiers felt for all things Catholic and you get a very potent mixture.

Finally, the war was marked by a comparatively large number of incidents when towns and cities had to be taken by assault.

This was almost invariably accompanied by dreadful episodes of rape and pillage.

Lérida and Tarragona were taken and sacked by the French, and Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz and San Sebastián by the British. The consequences were pretty ghastly. Nonetheless, it is important to realise that such incidents could just as easily have happened anywhere and there is very little that specifically links them to the Peninsular War other than, perhaps, a general dislike of the Spaniards.

TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE POWERFUL WORKS OF FRANCISCO GOYA INFLUENCED MODERN PERSPECTIVES OF THE HORRORS OF THE PERIOD?

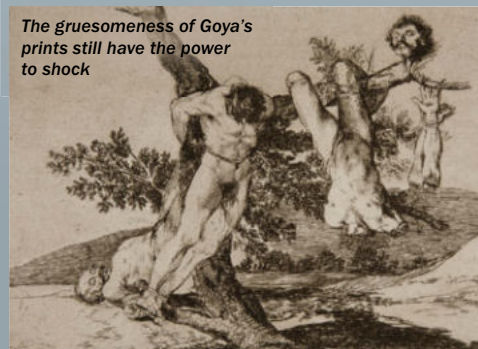
Enormously: they project the image both of a furious people united in opposition to foreign invasion and have made a powerful contribution to the manner in which the Peninsular War is generally imagined. However, in so far as the bloodier scenes are concerned (and it is these that are generally reproduced), the engravings known as the *Disasters Of War*

The Third Of May 1808 by Francisco Goya is a revolutionary work of art that starkly depicted French atrocities in Spain. It became the most recognisable painting from the Peninsular War



“FOR SOME IT WAS ENOUGH TO DRINK THEMSELVES INTO A STATE OF INSENSIBILITY AS QUICKLY AS THEY COULD, BUT FOR OTHERS THERE WAS A NEED TO SEEK A MORE ACTIVE AND VIOLENT FORM OF RELEASE”

are works of Goya's imagination. He remained in Madrid for most of the conflict and saw none of the sights that he portrayed. What is generally unknown is that they were not originally called *The Disasters Of War* but rather *The Lamentable Consequences Of Spain's War Against Napoleon*. They were a criticism, not so much of the French, but of the Spanish people (which he, like most educated Spaniards, regarded as an ignorant herd).



The gruesomeness of Goya's prints still have the power to shock

There is some genuine reportage: the famine in Madrid in 1811-12, the execution by garrotting of bandits and the rape scenes, which were no doubt a common enough occurrence, but they are not a reliable picture of the war. The two great paintings showing the rising of the Dos de Mayo are more reliable, but these are often taken wildly out of context and used, like the engravings, as evidence of an imagined war.

This whole concept of a great people's crusade against the French is largely an invention made up by patriotic 19th-century historians and politicians.

WHAT ROLE DID SPANISH GUERRILLAS PLAY IN INTENSIFYING THE HARSH NATURE OF THE CONFLICT?

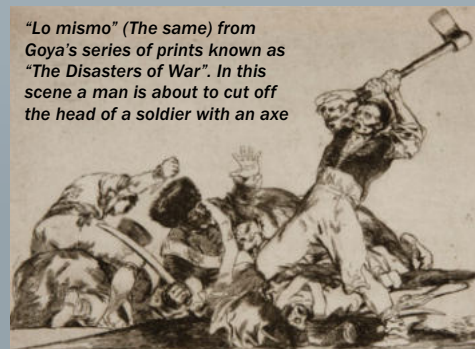
Mention the word 'guerrilla' in the context of the Peninsular War and the image that comes to mind will be gangs of armed civilians running around dressed in bull-fighting costumes and armed with knives and blunderbusses. This is largely an invention, a large part of the 'little war' was actually conducted by regular Spanish (and occasionally British) troops sent to harass the occupying forces.

Also a considerable part of those forces that might properly be defined as 'guerrillas' i.e. forces that had emerged without the regular military structures of the state, adopted military forms and patterns of behaviour fairly quickly. This included the fairly decent (or at least, not wholly indecent) treatment of prisoners. Only the very wildest elements made use of torture. These were essentially small groups that were one step removed from, or actually were, bandits. However, the actions of such men had disproportionate effects, whipping up fear and hatred, and led French troops to engage in terrible reprisals.

The behaviour of British soldiers in Iberia has come under intense scrutiny, particularly for their murderous rampage after the Siege of Badajoz in 1812.

WHAT WERE THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND THEIR CONTROVERSIAL ACTIONS DURING THE WAR?

What happened at Badajoz, and also Ciudad Rodrigo and San Sebastián, is to our eyes very shocking. To a degree, these episodes were fuelled by the resentment that British soldiers felt in respect of Spanish civilians – a despised 'other' – and the dreadful sufferings and privations that they were expected to endure in the course of a seemingly endless war. Yet they were also the product of a syndrome that had been a common theme of



"Lo mismo" (The same) from Goya's series of prints known as "The Disasters of War". In this scene a man is about to cut off the head of a soldier with an axe

soldiering for centuries. This was the idea that a town that resisted an assault on an open, practicable breach and all that it contained, was the property of the soldiers who were expected to storm it. This meant that they were entitled to seize and do whatever they wanted, whether it was raping women or killing for the fun of it.

Such episodes had been common enough in the past and the fact is, troops who had gone through the horrors of a breach were quite literally out of their minds with what they had gone through and were reduced to some state of psychosis.

For some it was enough to drink themselves into a state of insensibility as quickly as they could, but for others there was a need to seek a more active and violent form of release. It was horrific, but also understandable. At Badajoz, 2,200 soldiers were killed or wounded in an area little bigger than a football pitch. Nor could it easily be prevented: Badajoz and the other places were regular rabbit warrens into which the troops literally disappeared, while a disproportionate number of officers had been put out of action. It was all very nasty, but also very predictable.

IS THERE AN ARGUMENT TO SUGGEST THAT THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE FRENCH IN SPAIN HAD SIMILARITIES TO THE FEROCIOUS EUROPEAN OCCUPATIONS OF THE WORLD WARS?

Only in a general sense. The ideological and racial aspects of occupation during WWII had no real parallel in the Napoleonic era – though it is true that some of what happened had been common enough in earlier conflicts. In 1914, for example, the Germans had shot at least 6,000 Belgian civilians and the Austrians probably twice or three times that many Serbians. What happened in Spain was nothing out of the ordinary, the British had behaved the same in Ireland in 1798, as had the republican forces in the Vendée in 1793.

However, it should be remembered that by the Napoleonic era this was no longer just savagery for the sake of it. The Thirty Years' War had appalled Europe and a series of conventions had emerged that sought to keep warfare within certain parameters. One idea was that civilians should take no part in armed conflict and another was that fortress governors should surrender as soon as a practicable breach had been made. In both cases, the penalty was fire and the sword but the idea was no longer just to engage in violence for its own sake but to limit it to the strictly necessary.



The reality of Goya's works broke with the artistic convention of glorifying war

HEROES & COMMANDERS

The Peninsular War was fought in two countries but involved four nations. This resulted in a multinational melting pot of commanding personalities with tales of courage, co-operation, disappointment and even theft

ARTHUR WELLESLEY

IBERIA TRANSFORMED THIS BRITISH SOLDIER FROM A GENERAL INTO A DUKE

YEARS: 1769-1852 COUNTRY: GREAT BRITAIN

Above all others, it was the efforts of Arthur Wellesley that ensured an Allied victory over the French in Iberia. Britain's involvement in the peninsula originated in its ancient alliance with Portugal and its implacable hostility to France. Despite these important reasons for intervention, the British never had a large army in the region and their famous success in the war was mostly because of Wellesley's leadership.

Having earned his military reputation in India, Wellesley first arrived in Portugal in 1808 as a lieutenant general and defeated the French at Vimeiro. This initial victory forced the French to retreat into Spain, but Wellesley was temporarily replaced for reluctantly allowing the enemy to leave the country in British ships. In his absence, the British had to evacuate their army from Spain after Napoleon arrived with hundreds of thousands of

troops and their commander, Sir John Moore, was killed. This led to Wellesley resuming his command of British forces in Portugal in 1809. From this time, he fought a slow, difficult campaign that was nonetheless characterised by continual successes.

Despite constantly being outnumbered and short of resources, Wellesley won a gradual string of victories that have since become famous, including Talavera, Salamanca and Vitoria to name but a few. Many of these successes were extremely hard-fought, such as the sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz, but they always resulted in forcing the French to give ground or rethink their strategy. By 1813, Wellesley had managed to eject Napoleon's troops from Iberia and had ended the war on French territory at Toulouse.

The key to Wellesley's success was his clever use of terrain, logistics, intelligence and discipline. He also did his best to stop the worst excesses of his soldiers against the local population, even though he was not always successful. Ultimately, he described his strategy as forward-looking, "I made my campaigns of ropes. If anything went wrong, I tied a knot; and went on."



Left: Francisco Goya painted Arthur Wellesley in 1812 in the uniform of an earl after his entry into Madrid

JEAN-DE-DIEU SOULT

THE STUBBORN FRENCH MARSHAL

YEARS: 1769-1851 COUNTRY: FRANCE

Soult was the son of a country notary who joined the French Army at the age of 16 and was an officer within six years. Having risen through the ranks during the French Revolutionary Wars, he became a marshal in 1804 and fought well for Napoleon at Austerlitz, Jena and Eylau.

He took a major part in the huge French invasion of Spain in 1808 and chased the British Army under Sir John Moore all the way to the coast at Corunna. Soult was subsequently surprised by Wellington at Porto, but he defeated a Spanish army at Ocaña and then badly mauled Marshal Beresford's army at Albuera. Soult felt victory should have been his but admired his enemies' courage, "The day was mine, and yet they did not know it and would not run." Soult later provided great leadership after the Battle of Vitoria and managed to stave off a total French defeat in the Peninsula and France for almost a year.



Left: While in Spain, Soult looted thousands of works of art, leading him to be dubbed by one historian as "a plunderer in the world class"

WILLIAM BERESFORD

THE BRITISH COMMANDER OF THE PORTUGUESE ARMY

YEARS: 1768-1854 COUNTRY: GREAT BRITAIN, PORTUGAL

Beresford held a unique position during the Peninsular War. Although he was an Anglo-Irish officer in the British Army, he developed affection for Portugal and helped to restore the country's confidence following the French occupation.

After governing Madeira for the king of Portugal, the exiled Portuguese government realised they needed a commander-in-chief to retrain and reinvigorate their demoralised army. Wellington recommended Beresford who was made a marshal in 1809. Beresford removed corrupt officers and used vigorous discipline to produce a small but effective army that was trained on British lines. His reforms proved themselves at the Battle of Buçaco when Portuguese troops greatly aided the outnumbered British troops to produce a victory.

Beresford now commanded a multinational corps in Wellington's army numbering 30,000 men, but barely scraped a bloody victory at Albuera. Afterwards, his career went into decline as a field commander but he remained Wellington's second-in-command and played an important role at the Battle of Toulouse.

Right: Marshal Beresford in 1839. After the end of the Peninsular War, he managed the Portuguese Army for five years despite escalating political tension





During his time in Spain, Masséna was accompanied by his mistress who he disguised as a dragoon

ANDRÉ MASSÉNA

THE COMMANDER WHO WAS BROKEN BY THE PENINSULA
YEARS: 1758-1817 COUNTRY: FRANCE

Masséna had originally joined the French Army and risen to the rank of warrant officer, before he was discharged in 1789. Following two years as a smuggler, he was voted back in the army and by 1793, he was a general.

The rising star fought with great distinction during Napoleon's Italian campaigns and contributed to many French victories. He was made a marshal in 1804 and again proved his worth in the 1809-war against the Fifth Coalition, but he became unstuck when he was posted to Spain in 1810.

Masséna initially did well by conducting successful sieges at Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida but he then lost the Battle of Buçaco, before halting his invading army at Wellington's formidable border defences at the Lines of Torres Vedras. Masséna retreated into Spain where he was again defeated at Fuentes de Oñoro and was then recalled by a disappointed emperor.



Agustina's military exploits became legendary and she earned the attention of writers and artists such as Lord Byron and Francisco Goya

AGUSTINA DE ARAGÓN

THE DEFIANT DEFENDER OF ZARAGOZA KNOWN AS THE 'SPANISH JOAN OF ARC'
YEARS: 1786-1857 COUNTRY: SPAIN

Born as Agustina Raimunda María Saragossa Domènech, this heroine of the Peninsular War became a famous symbol of Spanish resistance against the French invaders.

Agustina was the wife of a Spanish soldier and found herself trapped in Zaragoza in 1808, which was being besieged by the French at a time when most Spanish cities had capitulated. Though they were vastly outgunned the Zaragozans put up a spirited defence where Agustina performed her most famous action.

On 15 June 1808, the French stormed the main gateway as Agustina was feeding defenders on the ramparts. Although she witnessed defenders breaking ranks, being bayoneted by the French, Agustina ran forward, loaded a cannon and fired it at point blank range. This rallied the Spaniards who rushed to help.

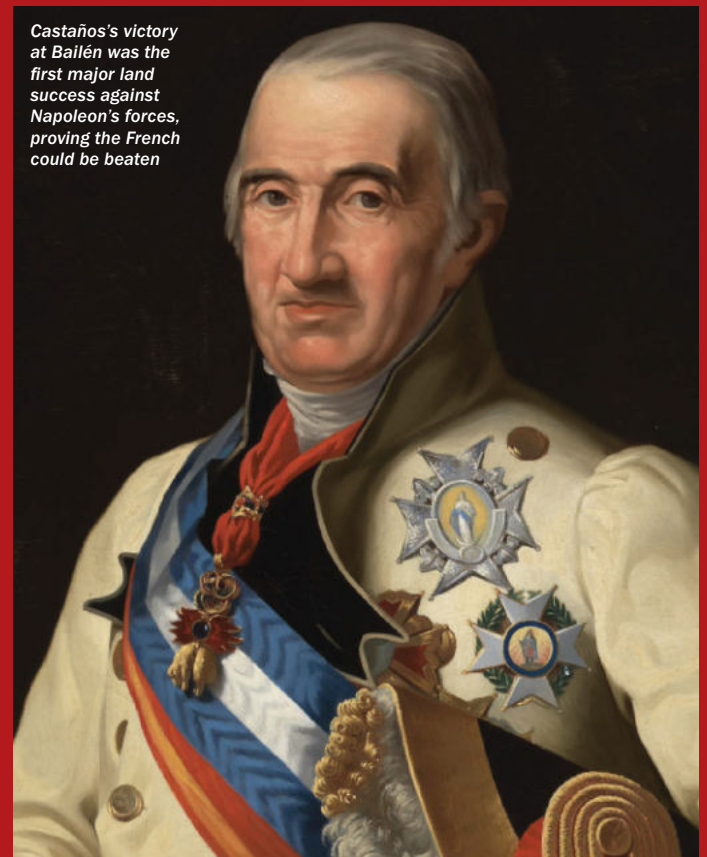
The French eventually took Zaragoza but Agustina escaped and joined Wellington's army. She is said to have fought as battery commander at Vitoria and obtained the rank of captain, the only woman ever to do so during the conflict.

FRANCISCO JAVIER CASTAÑOS

THE UNSUNG VICTOR OF A MAJOR SPANISH VICTORY
YEARS: 1758-1852 COUNTRY: SPAIN

Castaños was a dignified and intelligent general who won the first great Spanish victory against the French in 1808. After crushing a major revolt in Madrid in May, the French dispatched columns to crush what were believed to be isolated rebellions, including the main army of 20,000 men under General Pierre Dupont. Castaños's force outnumbered the French but his soldiers were inexperienced and untested. Nevertheless, Dupont made the grave error of spreading his men out along too thin a line along the River Guadalquivir. Castaños split his own force into three and attacked the French in separate locations.

Over three days, from 16-19 July 1808, the two sides fought each other until the Spanish attacked the rear of the French and forced them to capitulate at Bailén. Almost 18,000 French troops surrendered and the battle encouraged Napoleon's enemies across Europe. Castaños himself continued to fight throughout the war and was valued by Wellington for his reliability.



Castaños's victory at Bailén was the first major land success against Napoleon's forces, proving the French could be beaten

LAST HUNT OF THE FALLSCHIRMJÄGER

Since their inception, the Fallschirmjäger were one of the most elite units in Hitler's Wehrmacht

Recolourisation: Marina Amara

Paratroopers bring in supplies to the German positions via pack animal during the Battle of Monte Cassino, April 1944

LAST HUNT OF THE FALLSCHIRMJÄGER

HITLER'S AIRBORNE

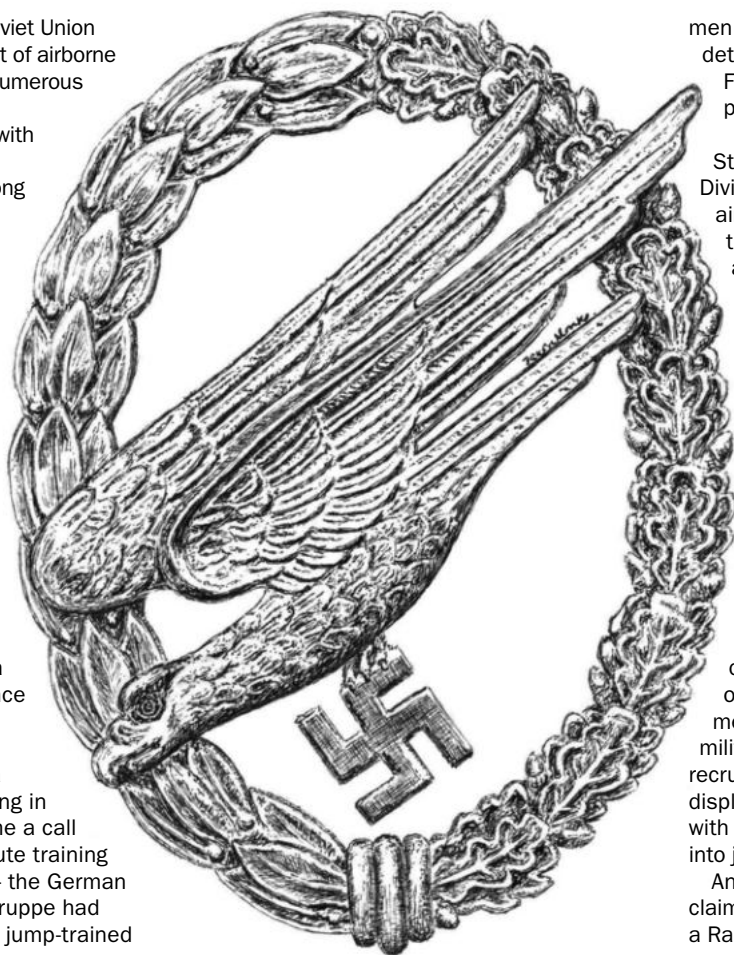
ELITE

WORDS ROB SCHÄFER

Fighting against the odds, the 'Green Devils' were a highly professional force responsible for pioneering WWII's early airborne operations

In the late 1930s, the Soviet Union was leading development of airborne tactics and conducting numerous experimental drops of paratroopers, complete with light vehicles and artillery. These inspired German observers, among them Hermann Göring, who witnessed these exercises and took home a determination to embrace the new concept. Göring, in addition to being the commander of the fledgling Luftwaffe, was in charge of the Prussian State Police. In this capacity, he commenced organising an elite group of special police to attack and annihilate perceived enemies of the state, such as communist cells.

This force, the Regiment General Göring, was eventually absorbed into the Luftwaffe in 1935 under orders to draw a group of volunteers to commence parachute jump training. In January 1936, 600 volunteers forming a Jäger battalion and a Pioneer company started training in Döberitz, while at the same time a call for recruits for the new parachute training school in Stendal was issued – the German parachute arm, the Fallschirmtruppe had been born. In March 1938, the jump-trained



men of the Göring Regiment were formally detached from their parent unit to form I/ Fallschirmjäger Regiment 1 A Heer (Army) parachute unit, becoming II/FJR 1.

Finally, in 1938, Luftwaffe General Kurt Student was ordered to form 7 Flieger-Division – the world's first operational airborne division. This unit would serve as the nucleus to grow the entire German airborne forces of WWII. Kurt Student, a professional and highly decorated soldier, had been in continuous military service since 1910, serving as an infantry and naval officer in World War I before transferring to the Luftstreitkräfte where he became a successful fighter pilot. It would be his operational doctrines and leadership that would turn the Fallschirmtruppe into one of the most elite fighting forces of the war.

Training was merciless, tough and aimed to familiarise the German paratrooper with the fact that he would be facing a numerically superior foe under dire conditions. Recruits were young, often only 18 years old, and as Hitler Youth members, they had already received basic military drill and weapons training. The ideal recruit was envisaged to be 'physically strong, displaying a readiness for action and bringing with him the will and courage to bring his life into jeopardy'.

An officer of the Fallschirm-Lehr-Regiment claimed that the Fallschirmjäger had to be a Rabauke, a ruffian, always looking for a

fight and relishing combat. As ruffians, they were granted liberties that were unheard of in regular army units. Drunken bar fights with German military personnel of other branches were common, whereas disciplinary measures were rather lax. Throughout the war, the paratroopers continued to enjoy all of these liberties as a kind of compensation for continuous fighting against the odds and under terrible conditions.

Basic training lasted three months and included marching, weapons handling, use of explosives, tactics and the obligatory drill. As an Einzelkämpfer (literally 'lone fighter'), every man was expected to be able to make his own independent decisions based on the combat situation and sometimes this meant acting without orders. According to a popular dictum at the time, every man had to be able 'to take out a machine-gun position or a bunker single-handedly, even if only armed with his pistol'.

Fallschirmjäger were among the few German soldiers to be trained in individual close combat (Judo). In the third month, and only if he had proven himself in the previous two, a recruit would undergo jump training. Parachute jumps were performed from sturdy, three-engine Junkers Ju 52 transport planes at speeds of about 160-180 kilometres per hour from an average altitude of 120 metres. Jumping out of the aircraft's side door, a Gruppe of 12 men could be deployed in only seven seconds. The RZ 16 parachute would open after a free fall of about 30 meters after which the Fallschirmjäger would descend with a speed of three-five metres per second. Six training jumps, five in daylight and one by night, were needed to gain the coveted Fallschirmschützenabzeichen, the mark of a trained parachutist.

A baptism of fire

Although it is hardly remembered today, the Green Devils, as they became known, first saw action during Fall Weiss, the German invasion of Poland in September 1939. Even though some airborne landing operations to capture vital bridges and road sections had been planned, it quickly turned out that the lightning advance of regular German ground units had rendered them unnecessary.

"ACCORDING TO A POPULAR DICTUM AT THE TIME, EVERY MAN HAD TO BE ABLE 'TO TAKE OUT A MACHINE-GUN POSITION OR A BUNKER SINGLE-HANDEDLY, EVEN IF ONLY ARMED WITH HIS PISTOL'"

The first Fallschirmjäger unit to draw blood was III/FJR1 on 14 September 1939. During an operation against so-called 'stray' Polish forces in a forest near to a German airfield in the area of Suski Młynek-Jasionna, a short skirmish developed during which seven Fallschirmjäger were killed, the first in the war, and another five men were wounded. Another notable, and this time largely successful, engagement was fought by II/FJR1 on 24 September 1939 against the remains of a Polish artillery regiment near Wola Głowska.

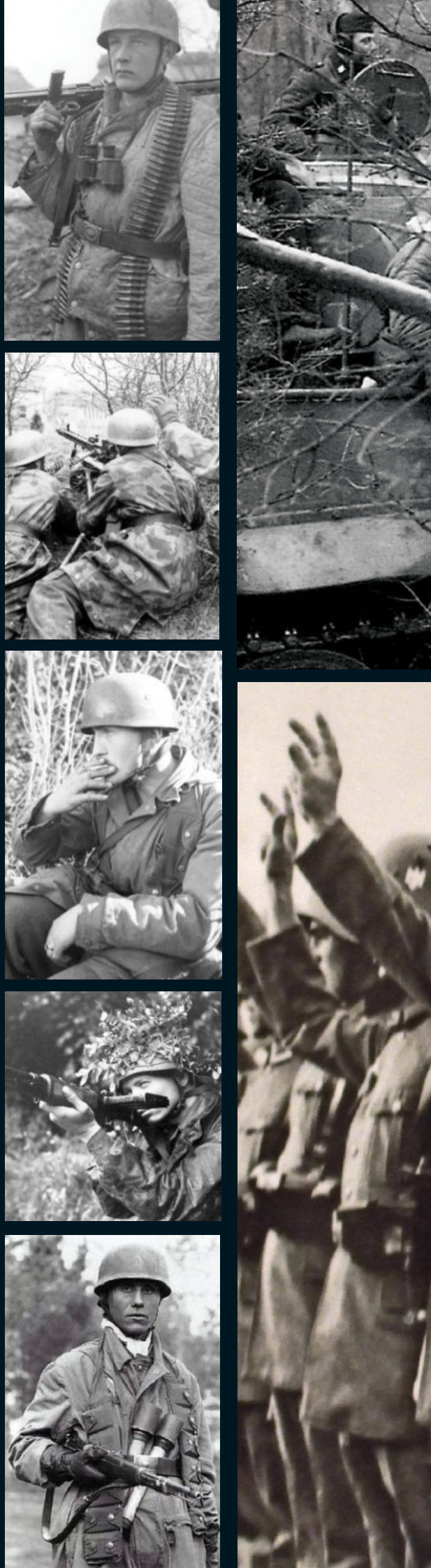
Both Norway and Denmark were invaded by Germany on 9 April 1940 in Unternehmen Weserübung. Faced with the strategic necessity of crossing the Baltic and seizing widely dispersed objectives in the face of a far superior Allied naval power, it was clear that this would be opportunity for the Fallschirmtruppe to play a decisive role. Its task was to take enemy airfields and strategically important traffic junctions and bridges. This would then enable the landing of other German units and begin routing transport planes with supplies and reinforcements.

Highly successful, these operations at Oslo, Stavanger, Dombas and Narvik were the first operational airborne drops in military history.

Corinth canal: Devils to the rescue

In October 1940, Italy launched a campaign against Greece across the Albanian border. When an Allied expeditionary force, consisting of British, Australian and New Zealand troops, landed in support of the Greeks in March 1941, Germany was forced to intervene to support its Axis ally. On 6 April, Germany launched Unternehmen Marita, the invasion of Greece. Only two weeks later, the Allied forces were in full retreat.

On 25 April, the Germans ordered an airborne operation with the primary aim to seize a bridge spanning the Corinth Canal. Linking the Aegean and Ionian Seas, this bridge would be the primary escape route for the retreating Allied forces, so capturing the bridge would be cutting off the Allied line of retreat while securing Germany's own way across the Isthmus. On 26 April, a small advance detachment of paratroopers of FJR 2 under



Right, from top: A paratrooper stands with an LMG during the Battle of Monte Cassino

Three troopers provide covering fire during the Allied invasion of Italy, 1943

A Fallschirmjäger uses a lull in the fighting to enjoy a smoking break. With a camouflaged helmet to help conceal him, this trooper takes aim with his FG42, France 1944

Oberleutnant Horst Kerfin photographed after the capture of Willems Bridge in Rotterdam

Fallschirmjäger were not issued with a regular army helmet, instead wearing one designed to reduce head and neck injury upon landing



Fallschirmjäger hitch a ride on a heavy Tiger I tank, Northern Front, winter 1942-43



HITLER'S AIRBORNE ELITE

Hauptmann Gerhart Schirmer, CO of II/FJR2 at Grafenwöhr, after the regiment's return from Crete, June 1941



Soldiers are sworn into the Regiment General Göring, a precursor to the Fallschirmjäger

command of Leutnant Hans Teusen landed near the bridge, overcame the British defenders and began to remove the demolition charges they had placed.

Fate struck when either the British set off their charges or a projectile hit one of those charges during an enemy counter-attack, causing a massive detonation that destroyed the bridge and caused severe casualties within the ranks of Teusen's men. Two battalions of FJR 2 landing only moments later forced the British on the south of the bridge to retreat and captured 10,000 Greek and British soldiers north of it. German total losses were 62 killed and 174 wounded.

Unternehmen Merkur: A jump into hell

The island of Crete in the Mediterranean Sea served as a basis for Allied bombers threatening the oil refineries in Romania, a fact that caused Hitler to ignore the advice of the OKH (German High Command), which was already planning the invasion of the Soviet Union and strongly opposed a strike against the island. Backed by the Luftwaffe, Hitler decreed that an airborne operation should be launched in May 1941.

On 20 May, a staggering 13,000 German airborne (Luftlande-Sturm-

Regiment, FJR1, FJR 2 and FJR 3) and 9,000 mountain troops divided into three groups and, arriving in two waves, were landed by parachute, glider transport plane and by sea. As soon as the initial aerial transports zoomed over the island and the first men made their jumps, it became clear that something had gone terribly wrong. Not only had the defenders been alerted by the preliminary German aerial bombardment but they also had ample time to prepare for the German assault.

Unknown to the Germans, British intelligence had broken the German ULTRA code in July 1941 and had since then been routinely reading German radio intercepts. More than 40,000 British, Commonwealth and Greek troops were ready to give the Germans a rather unpleasant welcome. Hundreds of Fallschirmjäger were killed by Allied small arms fire before they even touched the ground, while others were dropped over sea and drowned after their transports had been pushed off course by the heavy defensive fire. The second wave didn't fare much better. After a delayed start, the planes

did not arrive in one large wave but in small groups and individual, single aircraft. At sea, the Royal Navy made short work of the fleet of requisitioned Greek boats that had been tasked to land mountain troops of the 5 Gebirgsjäger-Division on the island.

Even though some objectives were taken, the attackers had to fight for every inch of ground. Initially outnumbered and not only facing regular troops but also a civilian population armed and willing to fight, the casualties began to rise.

On Crete, an old problem of the Fallschirmtruppe became a death sentence for many a young paratrooper. The RZ 16 parachute and its harness construction necessitated a rather athletic forward roll upon landing. To avoid physical harm a man could only carry his pistol some grenades and the occasional submachine gun on his person while long or heavy weapons and ammunition had to be dropped in special containers. In the chaos and slaughter during drops, some soldiers landed far from these containers, forcing them to rely on minimal defensive weaponry.

"AS SOON AS THE INITIAL AERIAL TRANSPORTS ZOOMED OVER THE ISLAND AND THE FIRST MEN MADE THEIR JUMPS, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT SOMETHING HAD GONE TERRIBLY WRONG"



Men of assault group Koch relaxing after the capture of Fort Eben-Emael



A young paratrooper of II/FJR2



Fallschirmjäger on the Eastern Front in snow camouflage posing with newly awarded Iron Crosses. Often only the ribbon of the Iron Cross 2nd Class was worn and the medals were sent home

A young paratrooper pictured on the Italian front, 1943



These officers were awarded the Knight's Cross for their role in the capture of the Belgian fort of Eben-Emael

Fall Gelb: Kicking in the door

IN A LEGENDARY FEAT, 82 MEN OF THE FALLSCHIRMTRUPPE CAPTURED THE LARGEST FORTRESS IN THE WORLD: EBEN-EMAEI

For the forthcoming invasion of Belgium and Holland, the Fallschirmtruppe was tasked with capturing a series of fortifications along the Belgian border, several strategically important bridges, as well as neutralising the Dutch government in The Hague. One of the Fallschirmtruppe's designated targets was the gigantic fortress of Eben-Emael in Belgium. Constructed between 1931 and 1935 on the Belgian-Dutch border close to the Albert Canal, it was the largest and most powerful fortress in the world at its time. Bristling with gun turrets and casemates, and sporting an underground tunnel system with a total length of more than five kilometres, it covered an area of nearly 1.5 square km, dwarfing even the largest defensive structures of the French Maginot Line.

The task to take the giant fortification and three nearby bridges was assigned to a specially formed

unit named Sturmabteilung Koch (Assault Group Koch) under command of Hauptmann Walter Koch. This consisted of 427 men and 11 officers of FJR 1 and a glider group. They were split into four assault groups: Gruppe Eisen (Leutnant Martin Schächter), Gruppe Beton (Leutnant Gerhard Schacht) and Gruppe Stahl (Oberleutnant Gustav Altmann) were ordered to take the bridges at Cannes, Vroenhoven and Veldwezelt, while Gruppe Granit (Leutnant Rudolf Witzig) was tasked to take Eben-Emael itself – with only 82 men landing in 11 gliders.

At 5.20 am on 10 May 1940, Witzig's gliders touched down right on the roof of the fort and the Fallschirmjäger, armed with hollow charges, explosives and flamethrowers, charged into action. Within 10 minutes, and amidst heavy defensive fire, the men of Gruppe Granit knocked out 14 guns and seven casemates.

The fighting above and below ground, in tunnels and casemates continued until the morning hours of the following day when German reinforcements arrived and the Belgian defenders surrendered. 82 men had captured the world's largest fortress. About 60 defenders had been killed and more than 1,000 taken prisoner. Six men from Gruppe Granit were killed, while another 30 were wounded.

In Holland, the paratroopers fared equally well, taking key airfields and bridges from determined Dutch defenders. In Rotterdam, 50 men commanded by Oberleutnant Horst Kerfin and under orders to take Willems Bridge, landed inside the Feyenoord stadium before commandeering a tram with which they continued the journey towards their objective. Bridges at Dordrecht and Moerdijk were captured and held against stiff resistance for two days until the arrival of German armoured columns.

The paratroopers' actions during the campaign in the west had earned them a legendary, even mythical, reputation that they would carry for the rest of the war. Morale was at an all time high, they were the cream of the elite and felt invincible.

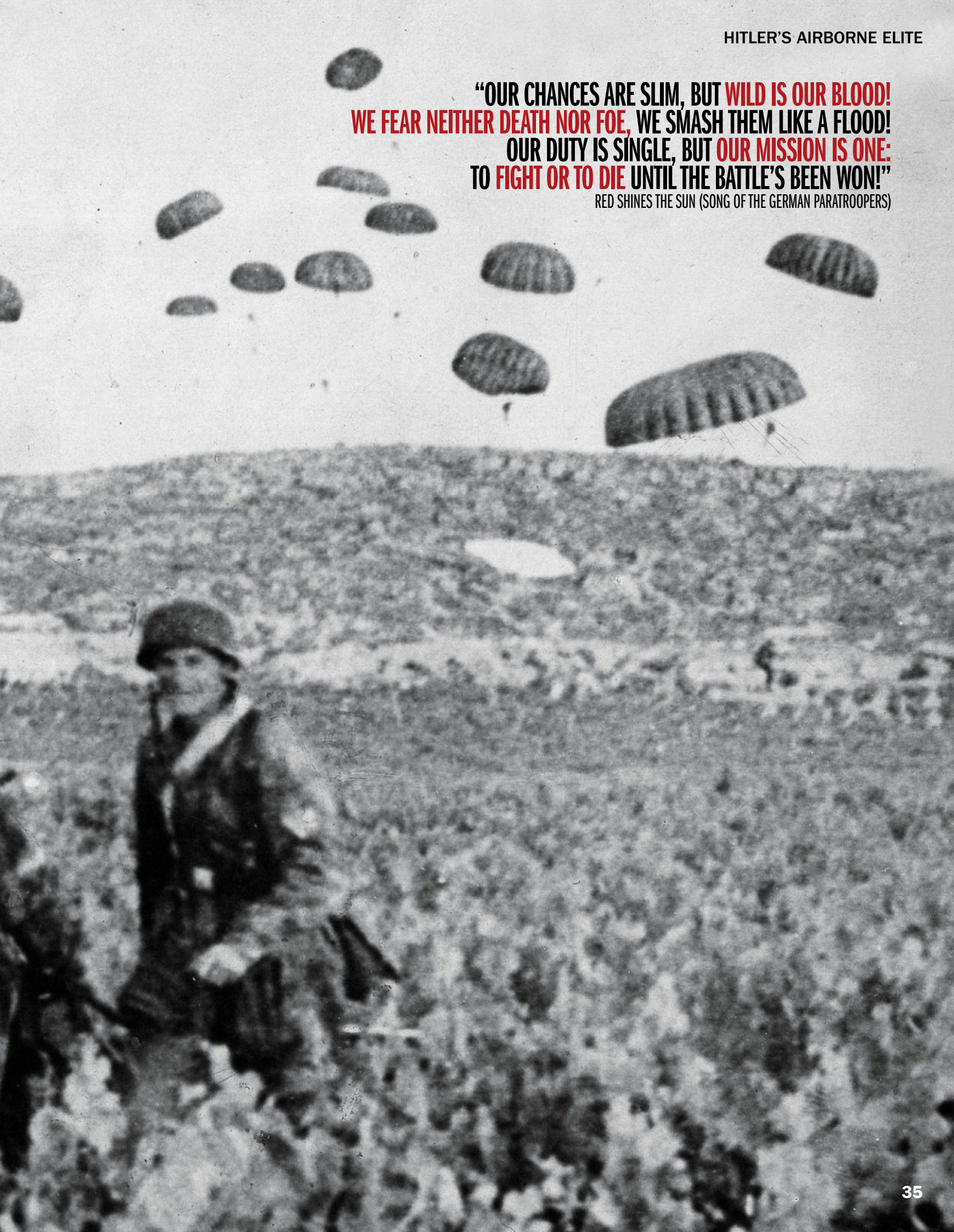
“THE PARATROOPERS’ ACTIONS DURING THE CAMPAIGN IN THE WEST HAD EARNED THEM A LEGENDARY, EVEN MYTHICAL REPUTATION”



*Paratroopers dropping
in during the Invasion
of Crete in 1941*

**"OUR CHANCES ARE SLIM, BUT WILD IS OUR BLOOD!
WE FEAR NEITHER DEATH NOR FOE, WE SMASH THEM LIKE A FLOOD!
OUR DUTY IS SINGLE, BUT OUR MISSION IS ONE:
TO FIGHT OR TO DIE UNTIL THE BATTLE'S BEEN WON!"**

RED SHINES THE SUN (SONG OF THE GERMAN PARATROOPERS)



The Devil's Armoury

AMONG THE MOST HEAVILY ARMED TROOPS, AIRBORNE UNITS RELIED ON AUTOMATIC WEAPONS TO SURVIVE BEHIND ENEMY LINES

As they were expected to face a numerically superior foe in hostile territory, Fallschirmjäger units were always heavily armed, relying on the firepower of automatic weapons to equalise the difference in numbers.

On paper, the typical Fallschirm infantry section was not only larger than that of the regular army (at least 12 men instead of the usual ten to make up for possible casualties suffered during

the parachute drop), it was also more heavily armed. In action, a section would carry two light machine guns instead of the usual one, giving it a tremendous firepower – this already formidable arsenal was supplemented by one or two submachine guns while the rest carried a bolt-action rifle. Only a couple of years later, the number of submachine guns was further increased. All of this was supplemented by a selection of

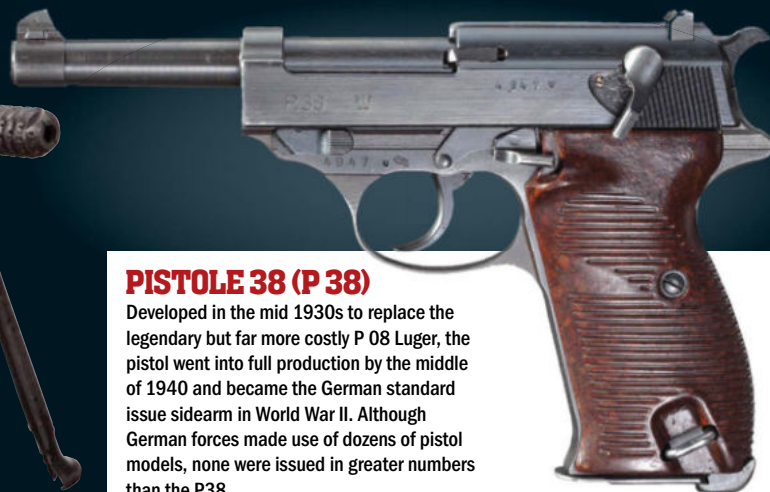
Nahkampfmittel (grenades and explosives) and handheld anti tank weapons.

Another difference from regular German infantry was that every Fallschirmjäger carried a pistol. Along with the Gebirgsjäger (mountain troops), airborne units were among the first to employ lightweight anti-tank and recoilless artillery pieces. In action, troops used a plethora of weapons, some of which are displayed here.



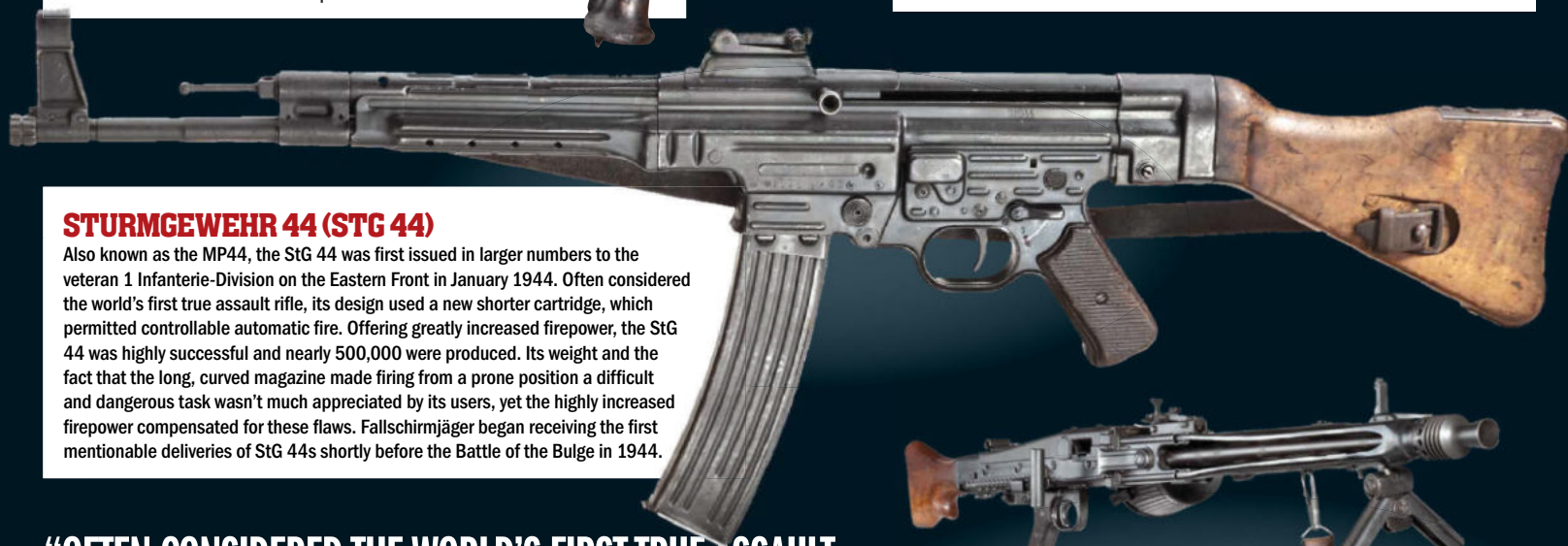
FALLSCHIRMJÄGERGEWEHR 42 (FG 42)

Highly advanced and especially designed for the Fallschirmtruppe, the FG42 was a gas-operated semi-automatic rifle of which only about 10,000 were made. Being able to fire in full and semi-automatic mode, the gun had a small bipod and was fed from a 20-round magazine on the left side. It fired the powerful German 8x57 IS cartridge, which made recoil heavy and the gun difficult to control when fired in full-auto. It sported a flip-up front post and folding rear diopter sight and could be mounted with a ZFG 42 or ZF 4 scope if the situation demanded it.



PISTOLE 38 (P 38)

Developed in the mid 1930s to replace the legendary but far more costly P 08 Luger, the pistol went into full production by the middle of 1940 and became the German standard issue sidearm in World War II. Although German forces made use of dozens of pistol models, none were issued in greater numbers than the P38.



STURMGEGWEHR 44 (STG 44)

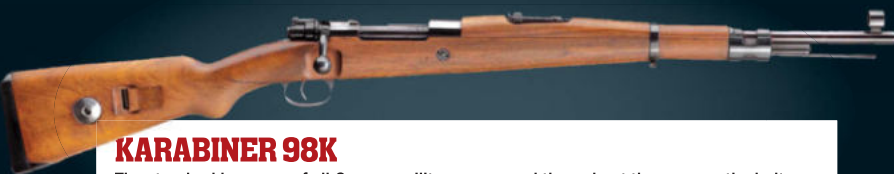
Also known as the MP44, the StG 44 was first issued in larger numbers to the veteran 1 Infanterie-Division on the Eastern Front in January 1944. Often considered the world's first true assault rifle, its design used a new shorter cartridge, which permitted controllable automatic fire. Offering greatly increased firepower, the StG 44 was highly successful and nearly 500,000 were produced. Its weight and the fact that the long, curved magazine made firing from a prone position a difficult and dangerous task wasn't much appreciated by its users, yet the highly increased firepower compensated for these flaws. Fallschirmjäger began receiving the first mentionable deliveries of StG 44s shortly before the Battle of the Bulge in 1944.

“OFTEN CONSIDERED THE WORLD'S FIRST TRUE ASSAULT RIFLE, ITS DESIGN USED A NEW SHORTER CARTRIDGE, WHICH PERMITTED CONTROLLABLE AUTOMATIC FIRE”




MASCHINENGEGWEHR 34/42

The MG 34 and MG 42 were among the most effective light machine-guns of World War II. The MG 42 was designed to replace the MG 34 because it was much easier and cheaper to produce, being made extensively from stamped steel parts and offered a drastically increased rate of fire with a phenomenal 1,500 rounds per minute. Firing the standard German 8x57 IS rifle cartridge, both guns could be mounted on a tripod, which turned them into effective and stable heavy machine guns. Both models played an important role in German defensive tactics up until the end of the war. Within the German Army, the MG 42 received a number of nicknames, such as Hitlersäge (Hitler's saw), Knochensäge (bone saw) and Hitlersense (Hitler's scythe).



KARABINER 98K

The standard long arm of all German military personnel throughout the war was the bolt-action Karabiner 98k. One of the most reliable, accurate and well-made service rifles at the time, it was chambered to fire the powerful 8x57 IS cartridge from a five round clip. Lethal on ranges over 1.5 kilometres, it formed the backbone of the Fallschirmjäger armoury.



Despite being outnumbered and suffering heavy casualties, including many senior officers, German flexibility, training and leadership slowly began to tell; the attackers began taking their objectives before fanning out to destroy enemy defensive positions across the island. Having secured the airfields, reinforcements and supplies were flown in and by 27 May, the defenders were demoralised and in full retreat, the town and airfield of Heraklion were taken by the Germans.

This was a victory and one that would define the fate of the Fallschirmtruppe. More than 2,000 paratroopers had been killed in action while a staggering 1,700 were missing and another 2,000 wounded. The Allies had 3,500 men killed and wounded while 17,500 men had been taken prisoner. In addition, the mission was marred by several atrocities committed by German paratroopers – several hundred Cretan civilians were massacred in reprisals for alleged attacks against German troops.

Although Kurt Student had hoped that the success on Crete would lead to even larger and more daring airborne operations, Hitler was so shocked by the losses that he decided the element of surprise had been lost. Even though there were to be some minor airborne operations, the Devils would from now on serve in an elite infantry role. After the war, Student would be found guilty of war crimes committed by men under his command in Crete.

Italy, Sicily and North Africa

The first paratrooper unit to arrive in Africa in January 1942 was Kampfgruppe Burckhardt, which joined Rommel's Afrika Korps in the offensive that pushed the British back to Cyrenaica. In July the Fallschirmjäger-Brigade Ramcke, commanded by Generalmajor Bernhard Ramcke, arrived, seeing action in the front lines at El Alamein.

Devoid of motorised transport and cut off by General Montgomery's offensive, in October Ramcke chose not to surrender. In a legendary feat of arms he led his 600 remaining men across 320 kilometres of burning hot desert, capturing British transport vehicles, taking more than 100 prisoners and striking an enemy supply column to keep his men watered and fed. The remnants of some FJR units continued to serve in Africa until the capitulation of the German and Italian forces in May 1943.

From July 1943, German paratroopers were deployed in support of the Axis forces trying to defend Sicily from Allied invasion during Operation Husky. Five battalions of FJR 3 and FJR 4 saw action in the area of Catania where they met their British brethren, the Red Devils of the 1st Parachute Brigade, in action for the first time. After being pushed back with other German forces, the Fallschirmjäger was among the last to be evacuated from the island.

Shortly after the defection of Italy and the arrest of Mussolini, Fallschirmjäger-Division was among the units sent to Rome to disarm the Italian garrison. On 12 September, in Unternehmen Eiche, a Fallschirmjäger task force consisting of three companies of the Fallschirm-Lehrbattalion would conduct one of the most daring operations of the war.

After taking possession of the lower terminus of the cable car leading to the Hotel Campo

"GERMAN COMMANDERS USUALLY OPTED TO USE THE PARATROOPERS AS A KIND OF CRISIS REACTION FORCE"

Imperatore, a ski resort on Italy's Gran Sasso massif in the Apennine Mountains, 72 German paratroopers under command of Oberleutnant Georg Freiherr von Berlepsch landed by glider near the hotel itself with the task to free the imprisoned Benito Mussolini. They were supported by 16 Waffen-SS soldiers and six SD commandos of the Sonderverband Friedenthal under the command of Hauptsturmführer Otto Skorzeny. The Italian guards offered no resistance and Mussolini, accompanied by Skorzeny, was quickly flown out. Although the Fallschirmtruppe had conducted the operation, the German propaganda machine bestowed most of the glory on Skorzeny who, after a promotion, was awarded the Knight's Cross.

In January 1944, 1 Fallschirmjäger-Division found itself defending a part of the Gustav Line near Cassino, a small town at the foot of a hill and dominated by an ancient Benedictine monastery called Monte Cassino. The battle raged for nearly five months, during which the Allies threw themselves again and again against the German defences to achieve a breakthrough to Rome. Under the false impression that enemy units were positioned in it, the Allies bombed and destroyed the ancient building on 15 February 1944. The Fallschirmjäger immediately integrated the rubble and ruins into their defences, making it even harder to dislodge them.

The German paratroopers successfully disengaged and withdrew towards Rome in the middle of May. Fallschirmjäger units, including the newly formed 4 Fallschirmjäger-Division, continued to harass and fight the Allies near Anzio Nettuno, Florence, the Futa-Pass and Bologna up until the surrender of the German forces in Italy on 2 May 1945.

Ostfront: Grave of the Devils

Military historiography rightfully depicts the Eastern Front as the Grab der Fallschirmtruppe (grave of the airborne forces). Due to their effectiveness and elite reputation, German commanders usually opted to use the paratroopers as a kind of crisis reaction force, a fire brigade of troops that could be thrown to wherever the situation was critical. To be able to fulfil that role, regiments were often committed piecemeal, sometimes in company strength and rarely more than 160 kilometres away from their parent unit.

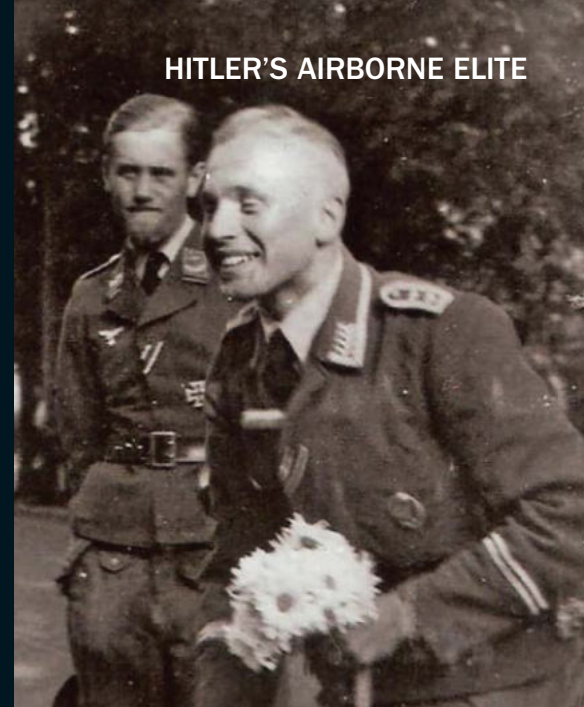
The war in the east was a war of ideologies, a war, as one officer put it, that was nastier and more terrifying than that in the west, war

Right, from top: Young Fallschirmjäger Stabsfeldwebel upon returning from Crete. Grafenwöhr, June 1941

Group photo before the first jump – Young paratrooper recruits, Stendal 1940

Wehrmacht soldier firing STG44 – the problems resulting from the long magazine are easily recognisable

Luftlandetruppen: German Gebirgsjäger, mountain troops in a Junkers 52 transport plane, Crete 1941



in its ugliest form and one in which mercy was neither given nor received. The first unit to deploy to the Eastern Front, only weeks after being mauled on Crete, was 7 Flieger-Division. Arriving in the deep forests and mosquito-ridden swamps of the Neva front in the Leningrad sector by the end of August 1941, its regiments were immediately thrown into action. Heeresgruppe Nord had laid siege to the ancient city; locked again and again into brutal battles with desperate Soviet troops trying to force a breakout, losses began to rise quickly. Within the first two months, the division had lost 3,000 men.

By October, all of II/Luftlande-Sturm-Regiment officers were killed or wounded within a week. On 3 October, its commander Major Stentzler sent out an honest and unadorned report by radio addressed to all units. "The enemy is worn out and demoralised. He doesn't believe in victory anymore. Neither do we!" He was killed the following day.

By mid November, in the early stages of one of the worst winters in recorded history, temperatures first began to drop to -30 degrees Celsius, yet the men of 7th Flieger held out until finally being relieved in early December. Looking back at his experiences, a young paratrooper wrote, "I'd rather land on Crete seven times over instead of fighting once on the Neva."

Fallschirmjäger units continued to serve in the east: at Leningrad and Stalingrad in 1942, Smolensk in 1942-43, at Zhitomir in November 1943 and Kirovograd in December of the same year. Things didn't change in 1944, when the precious airborne units were continuously decimated in desperate actions, always trying to block holes in the line to stem the advance of the Soviet juggernaut. Being pushed closer and closer towards the borders of the Reich, Fallschirmjäger ended up fighting in the Battle of Seelow and in Berlin itself.

In defence of the Reich

After the Allied landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944, one of the first German units to engage



the elite American troops of the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions in the area of Carentan was FJR 6, under command of Major Friedrich von der Heydte. Although virtually destroyed, against all odds the fierce and effective resistance offered by FJR 6 earned them the respect of friend and foe alike and would coin their nickname 'The Lions of Carentan'.

While the Allies gathered strength on the beaches and bridgeheads, the Battle of Normandy raged on. Pinned down by Allied airpower and facing an enemy with near endless supplies and reserves, German units (paratroopers among them) suffered severe and irreplaceable casualties. When the Allies launched Operation Goodwood and Cobra, they pushed aside what little resistance the German defenders could offer. Four Fallschirmjäger-Divisionen were virtually wiped out in Normandy, the last, 2 FJD, surrendered at Brest in September 1944.

With the German front having been pushed back into Belgium, a number of new units, mostly consisting of the remnants of troops decimated in the Normandy fighting, were raised to form a new parachute army. This army, 1 Fallschirmjäger-Armee under General Student, saw action during Operation Market Garden where it acquitted itself well. Yet any resistance the German Army could offer could only hope to delay the Allied advance and it

didn't take long until the Green Devils were fighting on German territory. Unternehmen Stösser was launched on 16 December 1944 as part of the German offensive in the Ardennes and was to be the last German airborne operation of the war.

A paratrooper battle group commanded by Oberstleutnant von der Heydte was tasked to land behind enemy lines, north of Malmedy and to take and hold a strategically important crossroads. This was then to be defended until being relieved by 12 SS Panzer-Division.

These were not the paratroopers that had taken Crete or defended Monte Cassino, many of the men were young, inexperienced and had never seen combat. The same applied to the aircrew of the transport aircraft. Tricky weather conditions and inexperienced crews caused utter chaos.

Only having 125 men, a number of them injured from the drop and only lightly armed, there was no way that von der Heydte could complete his objective. Radios had been broken and there was no means to contact German HQ. Even though his force swelled to about 300 days later, he ordered his men to disperse in groups of three to four and make their way own back to German lines. Less than half arrived. Von der Heydte himself, painfully wounded in the arm during the drop, surrendered himself to the Americans a couple of days later.

In order to seize the initiative, these paratroopers train to attack and advance after landing. This is taking place in 1938 at the training school in Stendal

"EVEN THOUGH MOST OF THE SEASONED VETERANS OF PREVIOUS CAMPAIGNS WERE NO MORE AND THE GAPS HAD BEEN FILLED WITH SUPERFICIALLY TRAINED AND INEXPERIENCED REPLACEMENTS, MORALE WAS FAR FROM BROKEN"





Above, from left: Two Fallschirmjäger on the lookout for enemy movement, Italy 1943

While Tobacco rations to the Wehrmacht were reduced, it was one of the few comforts to enjoy on the front

Both airborne and mountain troops bury their fallen comrades after the Battle of Crete

The last major actions of German paratroopers took part during the Allied Operations Plunder and Varsity and were fought across the Lower Rhine in Germany. Even though most of the seasoned veterans were no more and the gaps had been filled with superficially trained and inexperienced replacements, morale was far from broken. Comradeship and the fighting spirit of the Fallschirmtruppe still held the units together. Knowing this, German commanders again used them in a fire brigade role, committing battalions, companies and squads piecemeal across the defensive fronts where small groups fiercely defended rural farm complexes, forests and ruins of bombed villages and towns.

"During the fierce fighting in the Reichswald-Battle and during the defence of the Rhine, the Fallschirm Army had been heavily, in fact very heavily, melted down. Yet its fighting capacity remained unbroken until the last day. Up until the final hour, the spirit of the men remained second to none. It was the Fallschirm Army that dictated the rhythm and speed of our retreat."

Images: Alamy, Getty, TopFoto



The ten commandments of the German paratrooper

- 1** YOU ARE THE **CHOSEN ONES** OF THE GERMAN ARMY
- 2** YOU SHALL **SEEK COMBAT AND TRAIN** YOURSELVES TO ENDURE ANY MANNER OF TEST
- 3** TO YOU, **BATTLE SHALL BE THE FULFILMENT**
- 4** CULTIVATE **TRUE COMRADESHIP**, FOR BY THE AID OF YOUR COMRADES YOU WILL **CONQUER OR DIE**
- 5** BEWARE OF TALKING. **BE NOT CORRUPTIBLE**. MEN ACT WHILE WOMEN CHATTER. CHATTER MAY BRING YOU TO THE GRAVE
- 6** **BE CALM AND PRUDENT, STRONG AND RESOLUTE**. VALOUR AND ENTHUSIASM OF AN OFFENSIVE SPIRIT WILL CAUSE YOU TO PREVAIL IN THE ATTACK
- 7** THE MOST **PRECIOUS** THING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE FOE IS **AMMUNITION**. HE WHO SHOOTS USELESSLY, MERELY TO COMFORT HIMSELF, IS A MAN OF STRAW WHO MERITS NOT THE TITLE OF FALLSCHIRMJÄGER
- 8** YOU CAN TRIUMPH ONLY IF YOUR WEAPONS ARE GOOD. SEE TO IT THAT YOU SUBMIT YOURSELF TO THIS LAW – **FIRST THY WEAPON, THEN THYSELF**
- 9** YOU MUST **GRASP THE FULL PURPOSE OF EVERY ENTERPRISE** SO THAT IF YOUR LEADER IS KILLED YOU CAN FULFIL IT. AGAINST AN OPEN FOE, FIGHT WITH CHIVALRY, BUT TO A PARTISAN, **EXTEND NO QUARTER**
- 10** **KEEP YOUR EYES WIDE OPEN**. TUNE YOURSELF TO THE UTMOST PITCH. BE NIMBLE AS A GREYHOUND, TOUGH AS LEATHER, HARD AS KRUPP STEEL. **YOU SHALL BE THE GERMAN WARRIOR INCARNATE**

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF THE GERMAN PARATROOPER, WRITTEN BY KURT STUDENT, WERE ISSUED TO GERMAN FALLSCHIRMJÄGERS BEFORE THE BATTLE OF CRETE

Great Battles

SOLFERINO

The road to Italian unification and independence began on a tempestuous summer's day in the north of the peninsula

WORDS DAVID SMITH



OPPOSING FORCES



SARDINIA

LEADER

Vittorio Emanuele II

INFANTRY

37,000

CAVALRY

1,500

ARTILLERY

80



FRANCE

LEADER

Napoleon III

INFANTRY

83,000

CAVALRY

9,000

ARTILLERY

240

vs



AUSTRIA

LEADER

Franz Joseph

INFANTRY

120,000

CAVALRY

9,500

ARTILLERY

429

Out of ammunition, a French Battalion follows Colonel de Maleville to charge the Austrian line

NORTHERN ITALY 24 JUNE 1859

Solferino, the largest battle seen in Europe since Leipzig, heralded a new era of warfare and set Italy on the path to unification and independence. Although it could not match the number of combatants (or the horrifying casualty list) of Leipzig 46 years earlier, it raged at such an intense level that it led directly to the formation of the Red Cross and adoption of the Geneva Conventions.

As is often the case with new innovations, not all of the modern elements of the battle were fully appreciated at the time. The use of railways to transfer troops, for instance, was considered something of a high-risk gambit, although there was less room for doubt over the impact of rifled field artillery, which played a key role in the allied success.

Although many nations saw their men fight across the sweeping battlefield in northern Italy, the belligerent armies can be characterised as a French-Sardinian alliance versus an Austrian army. There were faults on both sides but it was the men in the Austrian ranks who would pay the dearest price for failings at the top of their chain of command.

Cradle of war

The fractured nature of Italy in the middle of the 19th century was a breeding ground for tension. Austrian forces occupied the north-eastern part of the country, while several independent states carved up the remainder.

The Kingdom of Sardinia (an area encompassing Savoy and the Piedmont area around Turin and nothing to do with the island of the same name) had rebelled against its Austrian occupiers in the First Italian War of Independence a decade earlier. The uprising had been crushed, but under King Vittorio Emanuele II, Sardinia was gearing up for another effort.

Recognising the need for outside assistance (and realising that this would have to come at a price), he encouraged Sardinian involvement in the Crimean War, largely to curry favour with the British and French. This was followed with a secret pact with Napoleon III of France – in return for French aid in liberating Sardinia, they would receive the French-speaking areas of Savoy and Nice.

Tension in the area started to build from early 1859 as both sides steadily increased the size of their armies. Austria made the disastrous mistake of believing the Sardinians were bluffing and that France would not get involved, and their resultant high-handed and arrogant handling of the situation only served to increase the likelihood of hostilities.

On 26 April, Austrian confidence was proved to have been misplaced. French troops started to arrive in Savoy by train.

The combatants

The armies that fought at Solferino and San Martino were equally matched in terms of manpower, but there were differences in the fighting qualities of the men and the effectiveness of their respective command structures. It is always distasteful to cast

aspersions on the commitment of men who were willing to stand in line while receiving shot, canister and bullets, but Austrian troops were also likely to go missing during a battle, although this could be interpreted as a perfectly reasonable response to the leadership offered by their officers.

The Austrian command structure was hopelessly fractured, with competing cliques and organisations often issuing contradictory orders. The Austrians were therefore habitually slow moving and muddle-headed. They did not exactly stand in position waiting to be knocked down, but there was a pervading air of pessimism among the ranks. The Austrians could call on 120,000 infantry, 9,500 cavalry and 429 guns on the day of the battle.

The French were more enthusiastic, but there was still a tendency towards impetuosity that had characterised their armies in the Napoleonic era; they were still more comfortable to advance than retreat. Officers were expected to lead from the front and did so. Consequently, they were killed and maimed in a very high proportion compared to their Austrian counterparts. French numbers at Solferino were 83,000 infantry, just over 9,000 cavalry and 240 guns.

The Sardinian component of the allied army was modest in comparison (just more than 37,000 infantry, 1,500 cavalry and 80 guns), but they would play a role in the battle to come by tying down the Austrians' best commander,

"THE AUSTRIAN COMMAND STRUCTURE WAS HOPELESSLY FRACTURED, WITH COMPETING CLIQUES AND ORGANISATIONS OFTEN ISSUING CONTRADICTIONARY ORDERS"

Ludwig von Benedek at the complementary action at San Martino.

Sardinian forces benefitted from a clearer sense of purpose than the multi-national (and multi-lingual) Austrian army and had drawn praise for their disciplined performance in the Crimean War.

All three of the major combatants had access to rifled muskets, although the Sardinians had only bought them in from Great Britain shortly before the opening of the campaign and the Austrian troops were in many cases being handed them as they marched into action. The French were alone in possessing rifled field artillery, which went a long way towards offsetting the numerical advantage the Austrians enjoyed in terms of guns.

Opening moves

The Austrian position was underpinned by a quartet of fortifications, known as the 'Quadrilateral' – alternatively, a springboard for offensive action or a convenient strong point on which to base a defensive campaign. This duality of purpose suited the Austrian mindset

very well; they could not decide whether to attack or defend as hostilities neared.

The obvious answer, an offensive to knock Sardinian forces out of the war before the French could arrive in large enough numbers, was delayed until it was too late, helping the Sardinians achieve their primary goal – survival.

In truth, neither side had a particularly clear view on how this war should be waged and there was a lot of improvisation. The Battle of Solferino was not the result of a carefully crafted plan on either side, it just happened.

On 29 April, the Austrians took a deep breath and invaded Sardinian territory, but their enthusiasm quickly ebbed and in little more than a week they had adopted a defensive posture. Their initial slow movement (bad weather had not helped) had allowed the French to bring sizeable forces into the theatre and the Austrians were suddenly aware that they had a serious task in front of them.

A minor defeat followed at Montebello on 20 May, followed by a more gruelling encounter at Magenta on 4 June. The Austrians were hurt as much by their own disorganisation as the

Below: Ludwig von Benedek had a rare knack among Austrian generals for motivating his men, but his efforts were confined to the fighting at San Martino

Austrian cavalry are unable to break through a square of French infantry and fall foul to their massed bayonets



allies ranged against them, but they fought well enough for the battle to be something like a draw. Around 4,500 Austrians, however, took the opportunity to disappear into the fog of battle, a recurring theme for Emperor Franz Joseph's army.

The French army was also suffering, mainly through a lack of discipline, which led to higher numbers of casualties than strictly necessary. Napoleon III, thinking that enough was enough, took personal command of the army despite his lack of experience. Around the same time, the Austrians also experienced a change of command. Graf Franz Gyulai, who deserves credit for recognising his own limitations, resigned his position and Franz Joseph picked up the reins of the army, setting the stage for the last major battle in which the respective heads of state all commanded their armies.

The Austrians attack

The Austrians, having withdrawn across the Mincio River, were in their customary state of ambivalent defence as the allied army slogged its way towards them, their progress hampered by hot weather and the need to cross multiple rivers. As the French and Sardinians prepared to cross the Chiese River, Franz Joseph saw an opportunity to strike.

The allied army would be advancing into an area very familiar to the Austrians. They held exercises there every year and were used

Right: A photograph of the Sardinian camp on the day before the battle reminds us that a new era of war reporting was underway

to considering the particular opportunities offered by the lie of the land. It made sense to attack the allies when more vulnerable as they crossed a river and probed their way into less familiar (at least on the part of the French, if not so much the Sardinians) territory.

On 23 June, the Austrians surprised everyone, including the Austrian soldiers themselves, by re-crossing the Mincio and marching towards the enemy. Once more, however, speed was of the essence. Intending to meet the allies at Montechiaro, they would need to be quick. They weren't – they were Austrian.

The French and Sardinian forces were already moving out into the territory beyond the Chiese when the advanced units of each army stumbled into each other early on the morning of 24 June. 250,000 men would fight on a battlefield perfectly suited to 19th-century warfare. Framed by the Chiese and Mincio Rivers to west and east, with the blue waters of Lake Garda to the north, there were also strategically located villages, undulating ground to screen advances and a large plain in the southern part of the field that might have been designed for large-scale cavalry movements.

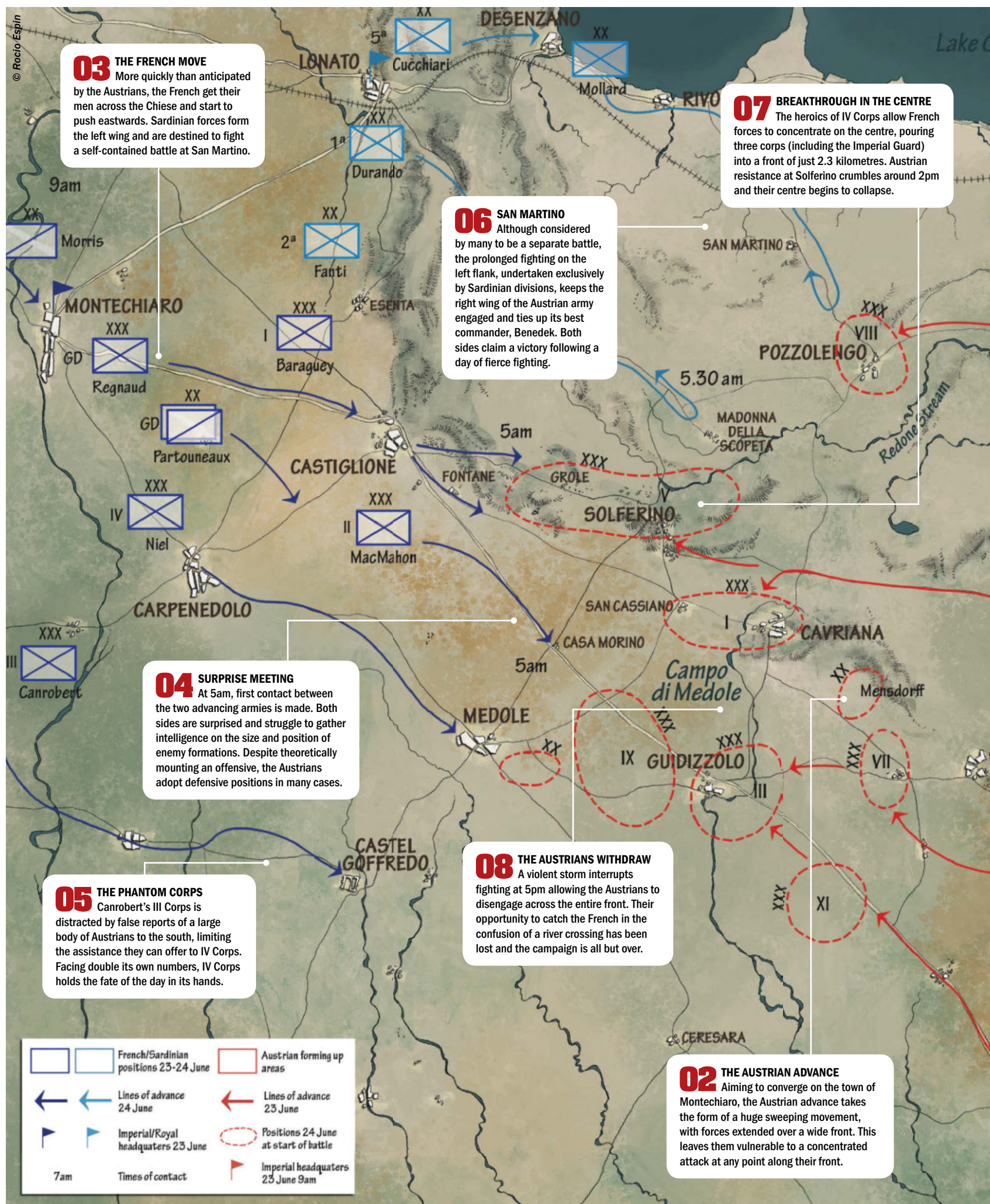
Austrian performance on the day was affected by the absence of their commander, Franz Joseph, who disappeared for hours in the morning. It is by no means certain that his presence would have imposed more control over the battle, but the distraction of trying to find him took the minds of many officers off the job at hand. He was finally found at 11am, by which time the battle was raging.

The first encounters

When the two armies made tentative contact (between 5am and 7.30am at various points

Below: Napoleon III, the French Emperor and commander-in-chief, had the distinction of having an epaulette shot off during the battle – always popular with the common soldier







01 CROSSING THE MINCIO
Under orders from Emperor Franz Joseph, the Austrian army crosses the Mincio River, hoping to surprise the allied French/Sardinian force as it crossed the Chiese.

along the line), the Austrians were still working towards their goal of converging on Montechiaro, while the French and Sardinians thought the Austrians were still on the other side of the Mincio. Confusion was inevitable as both sides struggled to comprehend what was going on, and this confusion threatened the French army with disaster.

On the right flank of the advancing French, two corps would play a critical role in the fighting. Adolphe Niel, commanding IV Corps, and Francois Certain Canrobert, commanding III Corps, were about to run into elements of three Austrian corps. To make matters worse, Canrobert was alerted to the supposed presence of a 25,000-strong Austrian force somewhere to the south and was ordered to guard against it. This Austrian corps simply did not exist, but the rumour of it was enough to paralyse Canrobert. His assistance to Niel was therefore limited and IV Corps had to fend off twice its number as the Austrians slowly plodded forward.

Exacerbating the situation, the few men Canrobert did send to the beleaguered IV Corps (just half of one division), convinced Niel that he was secure in his position. He notified the corps on his left flank, II Corps under Patrice de MacMahon, that he did not require its assistance and MacMahon diverted his men towards the centre of the battle.

The result was that Niel's corps was more or less alone for much of the day, fending off greatly superior numbers and holding the fate of the French army in its hands.

The left flank

On the other side of the battlefield, the Sardinians advanced towards San Martino. Although the fighting in this sector is often considered as a sort of twin to Solferino, rather than an integral part of the battle, it did directly influence it.

The Sardinians were unlucky in facing Benedek, the best Austrian general in the field, and had he been in command of the other flank or the centre, it is possible the day may have turned out differently.

Three of the four Sardinian divisions available played an active part in the fighting, but they proved that faulty leadership was not limited to the Austrians. A failure to properly co-operate resulted in repeated small-scale attacks that Benedek was able to fend off.

The pattern for the day on the left flank was set early.

Left: Vittorio Emanuele II would become the first king of a united Italy, two years after the battle at Solferino



Leading units of General Durando's First Division reached Madonna Della Scoperta by 5.30am but were quickly pushed back by Austrian forces. The Fifth Division, under General Cucchiari, almost reached its goal of Ponticello but was also repulsed. Benedek drove Cucchiari's division back so far that he was able to occupy the commanding high ground at San Martino, which would become the focus of bitter fighting and give the battle in this sector its name. The first of the repeated and fierce Sardinian assaults on the hill were made by troops from the Third Division, under General Mollard.

Although numerically superior to their Austrian opponents, the Sardinians were unable to make their advantage (25,000 to 20,000) tell. Aside from attacking in small units, they were also deprived of the support of their reserve, the Second Division under General Fanti, which had been placed ten kilometres in the rear and was unable to come up in time to make a difference.

The slopes of San Martino hill became spattered with the blood of the Sardinians who repeatedly tried and failed to take it. They did so without the support of their commander, Vittorio Emanuele, who chose instead to stay with the French concentrating on Solferino.

The centre

In an unplanned engagement, where neither side has prepared its movements and positions, much depends on the natural instincts of the commanders and men who encounter the enemy. The French instinct was to concentrate their forces on the centre, but this was less straightforward than it sounds.

The French I Corps, commanded by Baraguey d'Hilliers, was moving alone towards Solferino, with MacMahon's II Corps carefully bridging the gap between Baraguey and Niel's IV Corps.

MacMahon initially had his hands full with this. With two Austrian units advancing on him (IX and III Korps, under Schaafsgottsche and Schwarzenberg, respectively), he formed his men into a defensive line around 8.30am. His rifled artillery proved critical in outgunning the Austrian smoothbore field pieces, helping him to fend off the Austrian advance. Although unable to use the dreaded canister shot (doing so would have ruined the rifling in the guns'

Below: A dramatic statue of Vittorio Emanuele II commemorates the achievement of the first king of a unified Italy



Red-trousered Zouaves, depicted here in action at Solferino, made such an impression on American observers that their uniforms were adopted by both sides in the American Civil War

barrels), the enhanced accuracy and range of the French field pieces ensured that no Austrian infantry came close enough to make this an issue.

French cavalry also played its part, attacking any Austrian units that threatened to establish themselves in the gap between the two French corps. The charges were often reckless, but luck was with the French horsemen.

Two hours later, believing Niel to be secure following the arrival of reinforcements, MacMahon felt able to move towards the centre, focusing his effort on San Cassiano. The main French effort, spearheaded by two corps, was now pressing into the centre of the extended Austrian line and was soon to be supported by the Imperial Guard. Three Austrian corps resisted this assault, meaning that no fewer than six corps would go toe-to-toe in a desperately crowded area.

Solferino was a difficult place to attack – the approach being dominated by the high walls of a cemetery – but it also presented its problems to defenders. The defensive positions were difficult to reach from the east, hampering Austrian efforts to send in fresh troops as the fighting continued.

It was not until 2pm that the French were able to break through. With guard units arriving, and with cries of 'Vive l'Empereur!' taking everybody back half a century, the French swarmed over the defenders. Within half an hour the

Austrians were in retreat in the centre and the breakthrough had been achieved.

Crisis on the right

Niel, meanwhile, was engaged in a fight for survival on the right flank. By fending off superior numbers, he was allowing the French to concentrate their strength elsewhere, but there was a real risk of his being swept away, which would have exposed the flank of the French units advancing in the centre with possibly disastrous consequences.

Desperate bayonet charges were resorted to, in order to repeatedly drive back the persistent Austrians, but it was the gap between IV Corps and the French centre that would prove most dangerous. As MacMahon swung away to link up in the centre, the Austrians saw their chance to exploit the yawning gap between Niel and the bulk of the French army. They massed infantry for an assault.

Nearly three kilometres separated Niel and MacMahon, and 42 field guns (supported by two cavalry divisions) were the only chance of plugging the gap. It seemed inadequate, but the rifled guns proved their worth by keeping the Austrian infantry at bay.

After surviving the crisis, Niel belatedly received more reinforcements from Canrobert, who had finally satisfied himself that the rumoured 25,000 Austrians were nothing more than that. Niel and Canrobert would have heated words following the battle, but having been



ordered to watch for such a large body of men, the unfortunate Canrobert had little choice.

The storm

Back in the centre, French forces drove the Austrians back relentlessly. Advancing as far as Cavriana by 5pm, a severe storm then erupted, which put an end to the fighting for the day, at least in the centre. With the Austrian position fatally compromised, Franz Joseph reluctantly ordered a general retreat.

To the north, Benedek was unimpressed. His men had stubbornly resisted Sardinian assaults throughout the day and the fighting continued on this flank even after the storm had passed.

Having wasted time and men on uncoordinated attacks, the Sardinians finally mounted a concerted effort, amassing five brigades to attack simultaneously. The greater cohesion of the assault, together with the order to withdraw, finally convinced Benedek that the day was over. Both sides could claim victory in what became known as the Battle of San Martino. The Austrians, defeated but not crushed, made their disconsolate way back to the Mincio and re-crossed it that night.

The fighting had resulted in thousands of casualties. Niel's battered IV Corps took the brunt of the losses on the side of the French. He lost 552 killed and 3,552 wounded, with a further 501 missing. (In contrast, the distracted Canrobert's III Corps lost just 313 men in total). The French and Sardinians combined suffered

The incredibly crowded area around Solferino itself saw intense fighting and became the critical point of the entire battle



“SAN MARTINO HILL BECAME SPATTERED WITH THE BLOOD OF THE SARDINIANS WHO REPEATEDLY TRIED AND FAILED TO TAKE IT”

around 17,000 casualties, with the Austrians losing around 22,000.

Following Solferino, the campaign quietly lost its intensity. With the Austrians falling back on their secure positions in the Quadrilateral, and with Prussia making noises about joining the contest (they started to build up forces on the border with France), Napoleon III took the decision to end hostilities quickly. An armistice was agreed between the French and Austrian emperors, much to the surprise and disgust of the Sardinians.

The partial success of the campaign meant that France did not get Savoy and Nice, and the Austrians themselves only gave up Lombardy, but it was a partial success that generated momentum. Within 11 years, Vittorio Emanuele would be king of a united Italy.

The Red Cross

The Battle of Solferino is perhaps best remembered for the impetus it created for the formation of the Red Cross and the adoption of the Geneva Conventions. This is despite the fact that many of the wounded were shuttled back from the battlefield on trains, giving them a much speedier evacuation. The problem was there were too many for the railway to cope with.

The impetus for the humanitarian efforts came from Henry Dunant, a Swiss businessman who arrived on the battlefield after fighting had stopped. Many men may have been transported to hospitals by train, but there were still thousands on the field, enduring unimaginable suffering from wounds and thirst. Initially engaging the local population in giving aid to the stricken men, Durant later went further. A book (*A Memory Of Solferino*) gave publicity to his cause and he raised the idea of an organisation dedicated to easing suffering regardless of nationality. The International Red Cross was the result and the First Geneva Convention followed in 1864. In 1901, Durant would win the first Nobel Peace Prize for his work.

FURTHER READING

- ★ SOLFERINO 1859: THE BATTLE FOR ITALY'S FREEDOM BY RICHARD BROOKS
- ★ A MEMORY OF SOLFERINO BY HENRY DUNANT
- ★ THE CAMPAIGN OF MAGENTA AND SOLFERINO BY HC WYLLY
- ★ THE RISORGIMENTO AND THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY BY DEREK BEALES

RUPERT OF THE RHINE

THE CAVALIER PRINCE

WORDS TOM GARNER

Charles I's swashbuckling nephew was a daredevil soldier who led an action-packed life of cavalry charges, sieges & adventures on the high seas

The British Civil Wars of the mid-17th century have largely been defined in the popular imagination as a momentous clash between the dour, puritanical 'Roundheads' of the English Parliament and the 'Cavalier' supporters of King Charles I. The truth is far more nuanced and the wars were exceptionally complicated, both militarily and politically. Nevertheless, the legend of the swashbuckling Cavaliers is enduring and the man most responsible for cementing their fame was Charles's nephew and commander of his cavalry: Prince Rupert, Count Palatine of the Rhine.

Rupert was the Royalists' most dashing figure and he was their foremost military commander during the First English Civil War (1642-46). His role during this historically important conflict is well known, but the prince's career was not just confined to the blood-soaked fields of England. Rupert's life was defined by war and he fought

across Europe and at sea, as a horseman, commander-in-chief, admiral and even a pirate. For deeds of derring-do and a life steeped in action, one need look no further than this colourful, if controversial, figure.

A harsh apprenticeship

Prince Rupert was born on 17 December 1619 in Prague, Bohemia, at a tense time in European history. His mother Elizabeth was the sister of Charles I of England but his father was Frederick V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine and the recently crowned king of Bohemia. Frederick came from a long line of German nobility but his assumption of the Bohemian throne in 1619 was ill timed.

The Thirty Years' War (1618-48), which would devastate continental Europe, had broken out in Bohemia the year before and Frederick had been asked to fill the vacant throne. This provoked the Holy Roman Emperor to invade

the country and after just a year, Frederick and his family were forced to flee into exile to the court of the Prince of Orange in the Netherlands. Rupert grew up here and developed a keen interest in the military. He first witnessed warfare aged 14 in 1633, when he joined the Prince of Orange at the Siege of Rheinberg and two years later, he took part in an Orange invasion of Brabant. This was followed by his participation in the Siege of Breda in 1637 and by then, Rupert was a seasoned soldier.

During this period, Rupert visited England for the first time with his elder brother Charles Louis, who was the new elector of the Palatinate. He made a favourable impression on his uncle Charles I and was awarded an honorary MA from the University of Oxford. This auspicious visit would determine his future life and career, but for now the young prince returned to Europe to continue the fight against the Holy Roman Emperor.

Charles I gathers his military council before the Battle of Edgehill in 1642. Rupert is the seated figure on the left



Prince Rupert as he might have appeared in the early part of the first British Civil Wars. The prince contributed to the popular image of the dandyish 'Cavaliers' and a contemporary noted he was "always very sparkish in his dress." The most prominent colour on his clothing reflects his status as colonel of the elite infantry regiment known as the 'Bluecoats'. His sword and breastplate are based on contemporary cavalry equipment and his face is re-created from a portrait he sat for in the early 1640s. At his feet is his pet dog 'Boye' who accompanied Rupert on campaign between 1642-44.

"RUPERT WAS THE ROYALISTS' MOST DASHING FIGURE AND HE WAS THEIR MOST IMPORTANT MILITARY COMMANDER DURING THE FIRST ENGLISH CIVIL WAR"

Rupert's military apprenticeship was spent fighting in Europe during the Thirty Years' War. The brutal nature of the conflict would seep into the prince's approach to war in England



“WHEN CHARLES I NEGOTIATED HIS SUCCESSFUL RELEASE IN OCTOBER 1641, ONE OF THE CONDITIONS WAS THAT RUPERT WOULD NEVER BEAR ARMS AGAINST THE EMPEROR AGAIN”

It was a decision that nearly destroyed him. In 1638, Rupert joined an army of mercenaries led by Charles Louis in an invasion of Westphalia but this force was defeated by the Imperial general, Melchior von Hatzfeldt at the Battle of Vlotho and the prince was taken prisoner. Rupert was imprisoned at Linz Castle in Austria for the next three years in relatively harsh conditions where he continually resisted attempts to convert to Roman Catholicism.

At the same time, he spent his confinement self-educating himself on many topics, including studying military textbooks and manuals. This was an education he would rigorously apply and when Charles I negotiated his successful release in October 1641, one of the conditions was

that Rupert would never bear arms against the Emperor again. The war in Europe was now off-limits to Rupert and so he travelled to a country where his skills would be needed: England.

British Civil Wars

Rupert arrived in England in August 1642 with his younger brother Prince Maurice and a retinue of veterans from the Thirty Years' War to fight for Charles I at the outbreak of war between king and parliament. His arrival was met with acclaim and Charles conferred on Rupert the Order of the Garter – appointing him commander of the Royalist cavalry. Although he was only in his early 20s, Rupert was considered to be an experienced professional

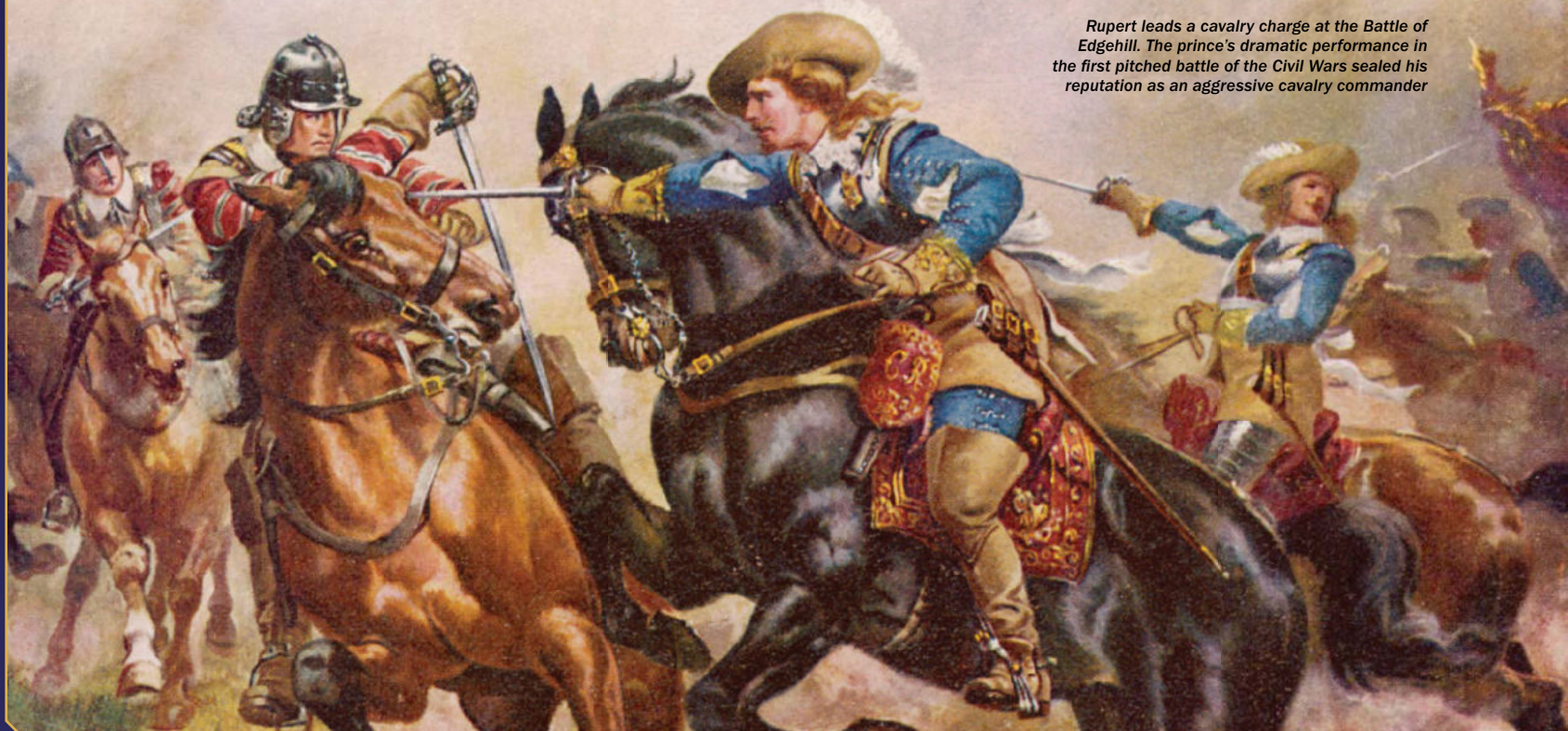
and his charisma inspired Charles's soldiers. One eyewitness remembered, “Of so great virtue is the personal courage and example of one great commander... he put that spirit into the king's army that all men seemed resolved.”

In an army of 12,500, the 2,500 men that comprised the Royalist cavalry meant that Rupert's prominence was assured. Although he only had a small staff of 16 officers, Rupert had the power to commission regiments, operate independently and strike deals with civilian authorities. He could also deploy his unique brand of cavalry warfare.

Rupert's most famous innovation was an engagement tactic where the cavalry were ordered to charge as close as possible to the enemy while staying in ranks with swords in hand. The conventional approach of the day was to charge, halt and then discharge pistols but Rupert's shock tactic was a reversion to the past in the age of gunpowder.

Rupert dramatically proved the worth of this tactic when he routed a Parliamentarian

Rupert leads a cavalry charge at the Battle of Edgehill. The prince's dramatic performance in the first pitched battle of the Civil Wars sealed his reputation as an aggressive cavalry commander



reconnaissance party at Powick Bridge near Worcester on 23 September 1642. This victory disheartened the Roundheads, but Rupert's real test would come at the first pitched battle of the war at Edgehill in Warwickshire, on 23 October.

Charles's army was positioned on the high ground of Edgehill itself above the Parliamentarians, who were commanded by the Earl of Essex. Rupert used the slopes to sweep down and scatter the Roundheads. His cavalry managed to capture Essex's artillery and even his coach.

While Rupert's tactic initially worked, he could not control his horsemen, who charged beyond the Parliamentary lines and plundered the baggage train and nearby villages. Consequently, instead of a decisive Royalist victory, the battle ended inconclusively. However, Rupert had proved his cavalry's worth to Charles and it was described as 'the greatest pillar' in the king's army.

After the battle, Rupert suggested an immediate cavalry advance on Roundhead-held London before Essex's demoralised army could return, but Charles's senior advisers overruled him. They proposed an idea for a slow march on the capital with the whole army and it was this policy that prevailed. Rupert tried to operate on his own by destroying the Roundhead regiment that guarded the Thames at Brentford, but this action terrorised the Londoners into assembling formidable defences and by the time Charles's army finally arrived, they could not break through.

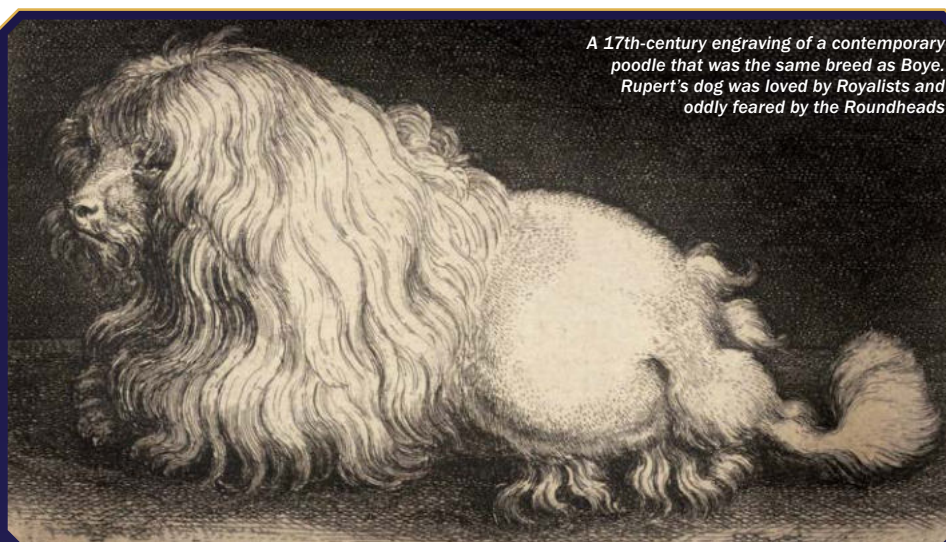
Charles had lost the chance to win the war in a decisive stroke and he withdrew to establish a new capital at Oxford. Meanwhile, Rupert had earned a fearsome reputation and he became a hate figure for Parliamentary propaganda.

From now on Rupert was the most energetic Royalist commander. Much has been written about Oliver Cromwell's relentless determination and spectacular success to ensure Parliamentary gains in the war, often at Rupert's expense. Nevertheless, before the emergence of Cromwell as a military leader, it was Rupert who gained notable victories and he was certainly no pushover.

The scourge of Parliament

Between 1643-44, Rupert galloped all over England while tackling administrative tasks. He was adept at exercising his cavalry and expanding their quarters, as well as conducting probing missions into enemy-held Buckinghamshire and Berkshire.

The prince had a particular talent for taking towns, such as raising the Siege of Lichfield before sacking Birmingham. On 26 July 1643, the prince co-ordinated Royalist forces from Oxford and Cornwall and launched an assault on the important port of Bristol. The attack was ferocious, with Royalist stormtroopers using flaming 'fire pikes' to intimidate the defenders before making a breach along the northern line of defences. The Parliamentary governor was forced to surrender and Rupert was triumphant. At the time, Bristol was England's second city and its major port was essential for overseas supplies. In the wake of its capture, Rupert took command of a strong infantry regiment to supplement the Bristol garrison and they became known as the 'Bluecoats' for their distinctive attire.



A 17th-century engraving of a contemporary poodle that was the same breed as Boye. Rupert's dog was loved by Royalists and oddly feared by the Roundheads

BOYE THE WAR HOUND

RUPERT'S PET DOG WAS A PECULIARLY DIVISIVE ANIMAL THAT BECAME THE SUBJECT OF ROYALIST ADORATION AND PARLIAMENTARIAN PARANOIA

Part of Rupert's cavalier persona was his almost foppish ostentation. The prince was known for his fine attire but arguably the most famous part of his appearance was the presence of his constant companion on campaign: his dog.

During his years of imprisonment at Linz Castle in Austria, Rupert was given a white hunting poodle by the English ambassador in Vienna. The breed was so rare that it was reputed the Ottoman sultan wanted a similar dog. Rupert called his new pet 'Boye' and once he was released, the pair travelled everywhere together.

When civil war broke out in 1642, Boye accompanied his master and when Rupert's fame as a commander grew, the little canine also became a celebrity. Boye was well loved by Royalist soldiers who gave him the unofficial title of 'Sergeant Major General' but he received the most attention from Parliamentary propaganda.

Roundhead pamphlets portrayed various depictions of the enemy's mascot ranging from the realistic to sinister accusations of witchcraft. Some stories stated that Boye had more haircuts than Rupert and had a favourable friendship with Charles I. The king reputedly

fed him roast beef from the table and allowed him to sit in his chair. On the other hand, Boye was also accused of being a witch's familiar and had the power to become invisible, foretell events and magically protect his master from harm.

Boye sadly became a casualty of war at the Battle of Marston Moor in 1644. He was apparently tied up at the Royalist camp while Rupert was fighting but he escaped to find his master and was subsequently killed. Pro-Parliamentarian pamphlets stated he was "killed by a valiant soldier who had skill in Necromancy." Boye's death coincided with Rupert's first major defeat and without his dog, the prince seemed to lose his winning streak.

"THE KING REPUTEDLY FED HIM ROAST BEEF FROM THE TABLE AND ALLOWED HIM TO SIT IN HIS CHAIR"

A contemporary depiction of Boye's death at Marston Moor. Parliamentarians described him as, "...this Popish profane dog, more than half a devil, a kind of spirit"



My dear Sir

The misfortune of London has been a great
 blow to our cause. We are now in a
 low state. All the friends of the cause are
 now in a low state. We are now in a
 low state. We are now in a low state.

Rich. Byron

Newark 20 May
 1644

My dear Sir

I have written the letter as touching
 the letter of the 10th.

Rich. Byron

"RUPERT'S VIGOROUS PURSUIT OF THE WAR REAPED ITS OWN REWARD WHEN CHARLES MADE HIM AN ENGLISH LORD AND DUKE OF CUMBERLAND"

The Bluecoats would follow Rupert into battle for the rest of the war and for the remainder of 1643, the prince attempted to consolidate Royalist territory around Bristol. After chasing Essex's new army from the Cotswolds into Berkshire, Rupert's tired army fought an indecisive battle at Newbury on 20 September, but the morale of the Royalist cavalry remained high.

Rupert's vigorous pursuit of the war reaped its own reward when Charles made him an English lord and duke of Cumberland in January 1644. The following month he was appointed president of Wales, with responsibility for the civil and military administration of the principality and the Welsh Marches. The prince took his duties seriously and reinvigorated Royalist fortunes in the area by inspecting garrisons, raising military taxation and deploying professional soldiers in the area.

Left: This letter was sent to Prince Rupert by Rich Byron, the Governor of Newark requesting help against further Parliamentary attacks. Unfortunately for Byron the letter was sent two months before Rupert's disastrous defeat at Marston Moor and the prince was unable to provide aid

An exhausted Rupert was sketched at the beginning of the republican Commonwealth. His eyes show the strain of years of hard campaigning



Elsewhere, the Royalist position north of the River Trent was coming under increasing pressure, which resulted in a Parliamentary siege at the strategically important Royalist town of Newark in Nottinghamshire. Rupert rushed to relieve the town by gathering soldiers from nearby garrisons and force-marching them, day and night, to arrive at Newark in March 1644. His speed surprised the besieging Scottish-Parliamentarian army and in the subsequent battle, they were completely surrounded and forced to surrender.

Rupert allowed the 7,000-strong Roundhead army to depart unmolested but he captured all of their firearms, including 3,000 muskets, 11 artillery pieces and two mortars. This was one of Rupert's most brilliant victories, with a personal congratulations from Charles himself. Newark remained in Royalist hands for the rest

THE 'DUKE OF PLUNDERLAND'

THE CONDUCT OF THE PRINCE'S TROOPS ON CAMPAIGN IN ENGLAND EARNED RUPERT THE HATRED OF MANY AND HE BECAME THE SUBJECT OF VITRIOLIC PROPAGANDA

Prince Rupert gained notoriety in England from the destructive behaviour of his troops while on campaign. By the 1640s, the Thirty Years' War had been raging in Europe for decades and had seen much of Germany destroyed. Looting, rape, massacres and the destruction of towns had become commonplace but this practice was not common in England as it had managed

to avoid becoming embroiled in the continental fight. Nevertheless, Rupert, who was German and had largely served his military apprenticeship in Germany, was accustomed to this kind of warfare and his lax approach regarding his soldiers' conduct earned him the ire of both the civilian population and his Parliamentary enemies.

Although he was a successful cavalry commander, Rupert and his storming of English towns, became infamous for his ferocity. One of the first towns to feel his wrath was the intensely Puritan Birmingham, which was famous for its iron industry and supplied Parliament with swords. After driving out the Roundhead garrison in April 1643, Rupert torched and plundered the town, which resulted in the destruction of 80 houses and 400 people were left homeless. Although the incident was comparatively small by continental standards, the incident fuelled Roundhead propaganda.

When Rupert was created Duke of Cumberland, he was scathingly dubbed as "Prince Robber, Duke of Plunderland" and a Parliamentary colonel declared he was not "a gentleman, a Christian or an Englishman, much less a prince."

This criticism was not unfounded particularly in Rupert's other attacks on towns including Bolton

and Leicester. In May 1644, the prince besieged Bolton and his Royalist army despised the Puritan population, particularly after the garrison hanged a captured soldier during the first assault. When the Royalists broke into the town, the storming was prolonged and brutal. The soldiers were allowed to rampage and up to 1,600 of the town's defenders and inhabitants were killed.

It was a similar story the following year when Rupert stormed Leicester on 31 May 1645. By the now the Royalists were losing the war and Rupert was attempting to advance north through the Midlands to regain control of that area of England. Leicester had minimal defences but its garrison did not immediately surrender to Rupert and when the cavalry entered the town, there was fighting in the streets and hundreds of defenders were killed. One Royalist commander remembered, "Many shots were fired at us out of windows. I caused my men to attack and resolved to make an example for the rest. Breaking open the doors, they killed all they found there without distinction." Some of the town committee were hanged and others were "cut to pieces."

The sack of Leicester was later used as evidence against Charles I during his trial in 1649 and Rupert was vilified by Parliamentary pamphlets, "How many towns hast thou fired? How many virgins hast thou ruined? How many Godly ministers hast thou slain?" The Roundhead responses were hypocritical as they were no strangers to committing atrocities, but Rupert's actions arguably gave them an excuse to further their own bloodthirsty campaigns.



Left: This crude piece of Roundhead propaganda from 1644 depicts Royalist commanders ordering their soldiers to impale babies on spikes, among other atrocities. It tellingly demonstrates the bitterness of the Civil Wars

of the war but despite this success, Rupert's civil war career had reached its high point and dark clouds were gathering for the king's cause.

Division and defeat

Although Rupert was courageous and daring, the Royalist high command was ridden with division and others, particularly Lord George Digby and Sir John Colepeper, regarded the prince as "so great an enemy" because he was "rough and passionate, and loved not debating." This made co-ordinating effective operations difficult and a reorganised Parliamentary army, which included new commanders such as Sir Thomas Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell, further compounded the situation. Parliament had also allied with a Scottish Covenant army and the north of England was now seriously threatened.

Despite the internal division, Rupert conducted a lightning campaign in Lancashire, capturing both Bolton and Liverpool. He then turned to Yorkshire where Charles urged him to relieve York stating: "If York be lost, I shall esteem my crown a little less. Beat the rebel armies of both kingdoms, which are before it." Rupert relieved York by marching across the Pennines but soon encountered the Scottish-Parliamentarian army at Marston Moor.

On 2 July, in what was reputed to be the biggest battle ever fought in Britain (39,000 men in total), a bitter fight led to a decisive defeat for Rupert that was largely thanks to the emerging talent of Cromwell's disciplined 'Ironsides' cavalry. 4,000 Royalists were killed compared to 300 Parliament casualties and all of Rupert's ordnance, baggage and 100 regimental colours were lost. York fell soon afterwards and the Royalist hold on northern England was irretrievably lost.

The prince himself only just escaped the carnage but his position at court was unaffected and he worked hard to rebuild the Royalist war effort. In November 1644, he was promoted to captain-general of the army, which effectively made him commander-in-chief. This increased the hostility with Charles's advisors, even though Lord Goring was given an independent command in the south west of England, a decision that severely hampered Royalist co-ordination.

The war had now turned in Parliament's favour and in the summer of 1645, Rupert faced his biggest test. In an attempt to relieve Chester, the main Royalist army of 9,000 men marched north and stormed Leicester but Charles and Rupert collided with a Parliamentarian force of 14,500 at Naseby, Northamptonshire on 14 June 1645. The prince fought in the right wing with his cavalry and as in previous battles. They broke through the enemy's lines but their lack of discipline compared to the Ironsides was telling. As with previous engagements, Rupert's cavalry continued to attack the baggage train in Naseby village and after intense hand-to-hand fighting, the Ironsides' discipline, high morale and superior numbers won the day.

The Royalist infantry retreated and Rupert's Bluecoats made a gallant stand, repulsing two Parliamentarian attacks – but they were eventually overwhelmed, with Fairfax personally killing the regimental ensign. The Bluecoats'

RENAISSANCE MAN OF THE RESTORATION

PRINCE RUPERT WAS NOT JUST A SOLDIER, BUT AN ARTIST, SCIENTIST, INVENTOR AND BIBLIOPHILE WHO GENEROUSLY ENCOURAGED THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

Rupert was a man of many talents. His library contained more than 1,000 volumes in five different languages and he was skilled at the new process of mezzotint engraving, giving demonstrations "with his own hands" for the diarist John Evelyn. The prince also excelled at military science and was an honorary founding member of the Royal Society. His research included testing gunpowder and submitting ideas for water pumps, improved navigation instruments and even an early machine gun.

Rupert's chief scientific interest was in metallurgy and he set up several laboratories. He used his influence to begin experiments in improving iron cannons and developed an alloy of iron and zinc known as 'Prince's Metal'. He also attempted to produce a perfectly round lead shot and popularised the almost-magical glass phenomena known as 'Prince Rupert's Drop'.

The drop is a tadpole-shaped droplet of glass with a bulbous end and a long, thin tail. Created by dripping molten glass into cold water, its unique property is its simultaneous strength and

weakness. The bulb can resist a hammer blow but when the tail is clipped, the drop explodes. Although he did not invent them, Rupert presented the drops to the Royal Society and attracted the interest of eminent scientists such as Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke.

Ultimately, the rise of science during the Restoration period was benefitted by the unlikely patronage of Rupert and he therefore helped lay the foundations for the Enlightenment and, much later, industrialisation.



'Prince Rupert's Drops' were initially presented to Charles II as a scientific novelty, but they soon attracted the attention of the Royal Society



This depiction of the execution of John the Baptist was engraved by Rupert in 1658 and is considered an excellent example of the mezzotint style

destruction decided the battle and all of Charles's artillery, his stores and even his private papers were captured.

Rupert realised the war was lost and tried to persuade Charles to negotiate with Parliament but the king refused. When Rupert was forced to surrender Bristol in September 1645, he was shown every respect by Fairfax and Cromwell but Charles felt betrayed and dismissed his nephew. Angered by this stain to his honour, Rupert demanded to be court-martialed and although he was cleared, his war was over and he left England in June 1646 after the fall of Oxford. Despite his loyalty to his uncle and the service he had shown (including riding more than 9,250 kilometres during the conflict), Rupert was rewarded with exile and near-disgrace. However, his career and loyalty to the British crown was not over and the prince would continue to fight Parliament at sea.

A princely pirate

For the rest of his military career, Rupert's activities were almost exclusively at sea and were met with highly mixed fortunes. In the late 1640s, he reconciled with the now exiled royal family and when civil war broke out again in 1648, he took command of several warships that had defected from Parliament. These formed the nucleus of a Royalist squadron but an attack on England was chased to Holland in August 1648. Rupert only had eight ships available but he sailed to Ireland and from a base at Kinsale, preyed upon Parliamentary shipping in the English Channel, and donated any captured booty to the Royalist war effort.

When Charles I was executed in January 1649, Rupert was driven from Irish waters by the new Commonwealth General-at-Sea Robert Blake and he sought sanctuary in Portugal. Now fighting in the name of his cousin Charles II, Rupert's squadron continued to harass English shipping in the Atlantic and Mediterranean and was constantly pursued by Blake who denounced the prince as a pirate.

Blake's accusation was not without substance as Rupert repeatedly captured ships and sold their goods to the Portuguese.

The prince managed to evade Blake and proceeded to West Africa where he was wounded in a fight with the native population. In the summer of 1652, he sailed to the West Indies where he hoped to find a Royalist enclave in Barbados, but he discovered it had surrendered to the Commonwealth. His luck worsened when he lost two of his four remaining ships in a storm off the Virgin Islands and his brother, Prince Maurice, drowned. This loss devastated Rupert and he returned to European exile in 1653, an exhausted man. For the next six years, the prince lived in obscurity but the changing political landscape in England would steer his fortunes again.

Admiral of the Restoration

In 1660, Charles II was restored to his throne and Rupert was invited back to England. The memory of his role in the Civil Wars had not been forgotten and Samuel Pepys recorded in his diary: "I hear Prince Rupert is come to Court; but welcome to nobody." Now something of an aging dandy, Rupert was unpopular but the king highly regarded him and he was given a pension, appointed as a privy councillor and named as an admiral. His naval rank meant that he held significant commands in the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars that dominated Charles's foreign policy.

The Anglo-Dutch Wars were largely naval conflicts that arose out of the trading and colonial tensions between England and the Dutch Republic from 1652-74. Rupert first participated in the second war (1665-67) but almost lost his life in 1664 when a block of rigging fell on his head while he was inspecting a ship. He had only just recovered from his wound when war was declared in 1665.

Rupert helped to defeat the Dutch at the Battle of Lowestoft, taking or sinking 17 ships. Heartened by the victory, Rupert collaborated with George Monck, Duke of Albemarle, to entrench aggressive "fighting instructions" that were based on lines abreast tactics. These proved their worth at the Four Days Battle between 1-4 June 1666 where Albemarle had to fight the Dutch alone for the first three days and

An older and rehabilitated Rupert was painted in c.1670. By then, he was an integral part of Charles II's court and a leading admiral in the Royal Navy

the English were almost decisively defeated. Rupert, who had been away fighting a French squadron, managed to arrive on the fourth day and was conspicuous for his active leadership. He was forced to change his flagship three times but he managed to claw a stalemate from defeat.

A month later, Rupert and Albemarle won a victory at the Saint James's Day Battle, where the Dutch lost as many as 5,000 casualties and the English won control of the sea around the Dutch coast. His last military command took place during the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-74) where he was appointed as vice-admiral, second only to the Duke of York. This conflict was characterised by an uneasy alliance with France, which Rupert opposed. Communication problems with French commanders led to Dutch victories at the battles of Schooneveld and Texel in 1673. Despite this, Rupert was popularly hailed as a hero but he retired from active naval command and never saw action again.

Prince Rupert died in London in 1682 aged 62, a great age considering the innumerable occasions he had been close to death. This German aristocrat literally fought his way up to be a pillar of the British royal family, however his life is almost a tale of two; one the man whose forces were repeatedly defeated and who was the controversial defender of the old order. The other was a talented, swashbuckling man of action. Rupert's legend is secure but his achievements are open to question.

"THIS GERMAN ARISTOCRAT HAD LITERALLY FOUGHT HIS WAY UP TO BECOME A PILLAR OF THE BRITISH ROYAL FAMILY"

FURTHER READING

- ★ PRINCE RUPERT: THE LAST CAVALIER BY CHARLES SPENCER
- ★ THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR AT FIRST HAND BY TRISTRAM HUNT

Images: Alamy

The Battle of Texel in August 1673 was one of Rupert's last military engagements in a career that had lasted 40 years. Unfortunately for the prince, he presided over a defeat



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- In the North Sea, HMS Tenacious hunts Soviet Subs.
- In Norway, the SAS mounts a daring commando raid on a Soviet held airbase.
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ARCTIC CONVOYS

WORDS STEVE ROBERTS INTERVIEWS TOM GARNER

Treacherous seas, freezing cold, pack ice and attacks from U-boats, capital ships and bombers – welcome to the worst journey in the world

The Arctic Convoys' *'raison d'être'* came with 'Barbarossa', Hitler's attack on the USSR, commencing 22 June 1941. Stalin immediately demanded help from the Allies.

The most direct route was by sea, navigating a narrow 'funnel' between the Arctic icepack and German bases in northern Norway, to reach the Soviet ports of Murmansk and Archangel, the latter only being accessible in summer. So from September 1941, ships began the hazardous voyage.

British and American chiefs of staff were against this plan, citing stretched resources, but their premiers insisted. One of Churchill's objectives over 1941-42 was to engage German forces anywhere, so he demanded a 'cycle' of Arctic convoys. First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Dudley Pound questioned the diversion of resources from the Atlantic, but the prime minister wasn't listening.

This was no picnic though. Convoys enduring a week-long passage at eight or nine knots (slower than a runner) were sitting ducks against attacks from above and below. Crews loathed the winter darkness, particularly when ice ventured south and ships became coated in it. Sailors worked relentlessly, hacking away dangerous weights of ice and testing weapons because of freezing lubricants. 'Arctic Smoke', a layer of mist overlaying the freezing water, made seas particularly treacherous, while in more stormy weather, mountainous seas loomed more than 12 metres from trough to crest.

On one occasion, a monster wave stripped the armoured roof from the forward gun-turret of HMS Sheffield. Another time, a 'moving mountain' of water crashed so hard on the flight

deck of HMS Victorious that the forward aircraft lift was unusable. It is inconceivable that the sea could bend four-inch armour, but it did. On the Murmansk passage almost every ship, even the biggest, suffered damage.

Then there were the Germans, necessitating naval crews to often be at action stations 22 hours a day. There wasn't much sleep – a nap often taken fully clothed on a bench or even standing up. When U-boats formed a line ahead, the Royal Navy attempted to charge through and disperse them. Some sailors began to prefer rough seas as these kept the U-boats away.

It was impossible to stay dry on the convoys – heavy layers of clothing didn't keep the cold out and fur-lined boots failed to keep feet warm. When it was really cold, it was barely possible to breathe and sailors didn't dare to touch metal as it burned and stuck to their fingers, prompting a visit to the sick bay.

The summers were no better, with almost endless daylight increasing ships' vulnerability. The early forays, however, were promising, as a few British merchantmen made the trip late in 1941, arriving unscathed, with small quantities of tanks, aircraft and rubber. This barely registered with the Germans, but the sailors' luck wouldn't last.

Some of the perils were illustrated early. On 10 December 1941, the crew of Harmatis spotted smoke, then found a flaming lorry careering about the hold. The ship limped back to the Clyde, but poor cargo stowage remained a problem, with loads breaking loose and threatening ships' survival. Much material arrived in Murmansk damaged, a sickening outcome for battered crews.

"WHEN U-BOATS FORMED A LINE AHEAD, THE ROYAL NAVY ATTEMPTED TO CHARGE THROUGH AND DISPERSE THEM. SOME SAILORS BEGAN TO PREFER ROUGH SEAS AS THESE KEPT THE U-BOATS AWAY"



Right: Extreme conditions on the deck of a British cruiser herald a return to the ice age for the crew, 27 February, 1943



FORGOTTEN HEROES OF THE ARCTIC CONVOYS

The earliest convoys were coded 'PQ' (outbound) and 'QP' (homeward bound) and these became one of WWII's naval epics. With the threat of German capital ships, such as the Tirpitz, the convoys needed almost as many warships as merchantmen. The warships were fitted with anti-aircraft guns, while destroyers provided close protection against U-boats. Between them they sent up a formidable barrage against Heinkels.

Royal Navy plane-carrying cruisers offered safeguards against German destroyers as far as Bear Island, north of Norway, when they turned back because of increased air threat. Merchant Navy officers ploughed on without air cover and accusations flew that they were treated like children and kept in the dark. The Germans were also paranoid about losing capital ships, however, so 'action' was frequently broken off, as their vessels fled for the sanctuary of a Norwegian fjord.

From 1942, the British began transporting substantial shipments, which prompted a firmer German response. The unlucky Hermatis was



Soviet warships escorting Arctic convoys repel a German air attack in the Barents Sea on the Eastern Front

hit by two torpedoes on 17 January, water flooded its hull but thankfully the damage was contained and it limped into Murmansk, towed by tugs, yet still attacked by Heinkels. The same day, HMS Matabele was torpedoed, with the detonation occurring in the magazine. Only two survivors were rescued and many froze to death in the water before help arrived.

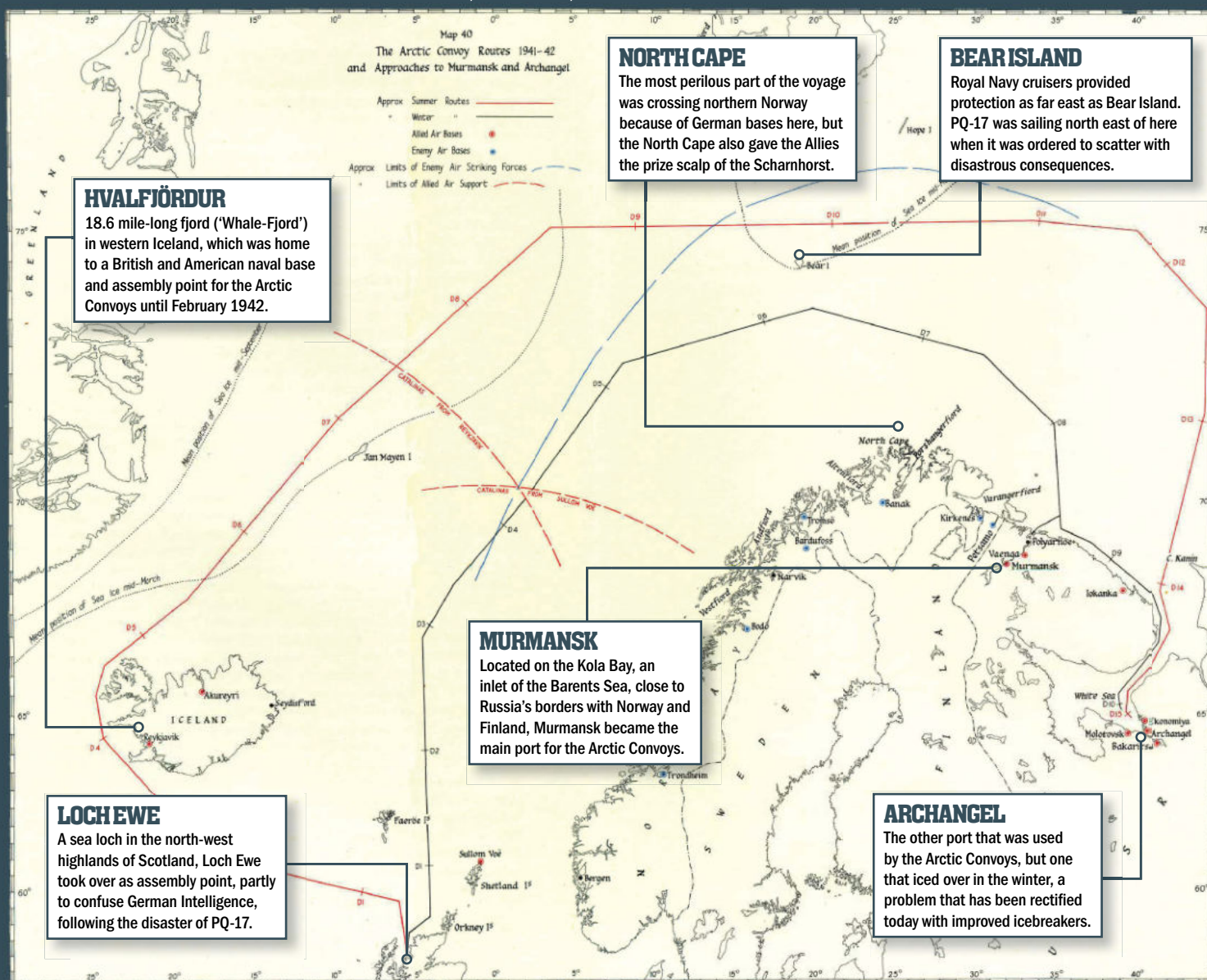
A German long-range aircraft, usually a Focke-Wulf Condor, buzzed about, transmitting

the convoy's position to the Luftwaffe in Norway. The stakes were rising and the last convoy enjoying a relatively straightforward passage was PQ-11 in February. PQ-12 suffered from thick pack-ice, then played a deadly game of 'blind man's buff' with the infamous German ship the Tirpitz, which intelligence reported was at sea at the time.

March 1942 saw PQ-13 scattered in a storm, then savaged, with a quarter of its 20-odd

THE WORST JOURNEY IN THE WORLD

THE 'MURMANSK RUN' WAS LESS THAN 2,500 MILES, BUT ACROSS THE CRUELLEST SEA OF ALL: THE ARCTIC OCEAN



SURVIVOR OF A FROZEN WAR

GEORGE OSBORNE

ACTING LEADING SEAMAN

BORN IN 1922, OSBORNE TOOK PART IN CONVOY DUTIES ON HMS SHEFFIELD AND EXPERIENCED A DETONATING MINE AS WELL AS THE SINKING OF THE SCHARNHORST

WHAT WERE CONDITIONS LIKE DURING A CONVOY?

The cold was the biggest enemy really. We never had any hot drinks and the only redeeming feature was that we would get a cup of hot soup on the noon watch. At the time we didn't really think about it but looking back it was horrific. We were huddled up in a shelter or behind the gun shield. Doing it for four hours was a long time but sometimes it was six hours and that wasn't very nice at all. The temperature was always below freezing and the further north you went the colder it got.

We eventually received more sensible clothing but on the convoys, all we had initially was the standard oilskin. They then gave us duffle coats that were warm but once they got wet they began to stink and you never had time to get them dry. We eventually had gloves and overcoats but they also gave us wool long johns and you itched constantly.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN HMS SHEFFIELD STRUCK A MINE OFF ICELAND ON 3 MARCH 1942?

We were three hours out of Reykjavik when we struck a mine. As I came out of the bathroom, I heard this thud and wondered what it was. I got ready and we went to action stations. We were told that we'd struck a mine although nobody was really sure whether it was a mine or torpedo. The mine had stuck in between the ammunition magazines and in between those were the rum and the officers' wine store. It was Sod's Law that the mine got the rum! All the empty barrels floated out and in the moonlight they looked like mines so there was a bit of a panic. The only casualty was a marine sentry who was stationed outside the captain's cabin and they found him floating in the water.

We got into an inlet off Iceland and started repairs. A Canadian officer went ashore and commandeered all the coke that he could find. The coke would absorb the water so they filled the hole with that. The next problem was how to sail the 1,600 kilometres from where we were to Newcastle and you couldn't rely on the weather, but we eventually got the ship down to the Tyne.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCES ON CONVOY WHEN HMS SHEFFIELD TOOK PART IN THE SINKING OF THE SCHARNHORST?

The Sheffield was the most sophisticated radar ship in the fleet and we picked up the Scharnhorst and chased her with two other cruisers. We were steaming at 26 knots when the ship shuddered and suddenly halted. The

other cruisers carried on and we were left in the Arctic Sea all alone while the engine room worked feverishly on repairs. Then all of a sudden it came through that an unidentified ship was nine kilometres away. All the guns were loaded because we didn't know who it was. I remember watching the range close from nine to six kilometres and my life went before me. It was the first time I felt really scared. Eventually we discovered it was one of our ships so we got underway. We could hear the gunfire coming from the ships. They finished the Scharnhorst off. We didn't see it because we weren't allowed out on the upper deck but the ship steamed past where she was sinking. More than 1,000 lives were lost that day.

“THE MINE HAD STUCK IN BETWEEN THE AMMUNITION MAGAZINES AND IN BETWEEN THOSE WERE THE RUM AND THE OFFICERS' WINE STORE. IT WAS SOD'S LAW THAT THE MINE GOT THE RUM!”

HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE CONVOYS? DID YOU CONSIDER IT AS JUST YOUR JOB OR WERE YOU AWARE OF THE WIDER IMPORTANCE?

We knew it was important and something we had to do. The people that I really felt sorry for were the sailors on the escort vessels and the merchant seamen. They were the real heroes. The merchant seamen were living on time bombs but they went ahead and steamed on. On the small naval ships, they didn't have cooks and had to buy and prepare their own food. Just imagine what it was like trying to prepare a meal with the ship rolling and water going onto the deck, it must have been hell.

WHAT ARE YOUR OPINIONS ON THE LATE ISSUING OF THE ARCTIC STAR MEDAL IN 2013?

Even Churchill said how bad the convoys were, but nobody stood up and said we should have had a medal. One officer fought for the medal until he died and I'm still convinced that when Vladimir Putin came and issued a medal to some of the veterans, it was only then that the British government agreed to award the Star – but that's just my opinion.

The view from the bridge of Sheffield, battling heavy seas while escorting convoy JW 53 to Russia



HMS Sheffield in calmer waters, c. 1944



Right: Before taking part in convoy duties Osborne survived an attack on his ship by the battleship Bismarck prior to her sinking



Image: Dorset Echo

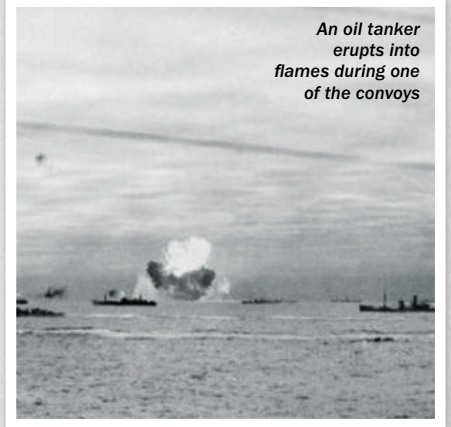
FORGOTTEN HEROES OF THE ARCTIC CONVOYS

Ice forms on a 50-centimetre signal projector on the cruiser HMS Sheffield while escorting an Arctic convoy to Russia, December 1941



"ARRIVAL WAS NO PARTY. THE KOLA INLET, THE FJORD LEADING TO THE PORT, WAS LIKENED TO HELL – IF IT WERE POSSIBLE FOR HELL TO BE THAT COLD – WITH LUFTWAFFE ATTACKS ON MURMANSK OCCURRING ALMOST DAILY"

An oil tanker erupts into flames during one of the convoys



Below: HMS Honeysuckle alongside the aircraft carrier HMS Trumpeter in the Kola Inlet



HMS Duke Of York ploughs through heavy seas whilst helping to guard convoy lanes to Russia



SURVIVOR OF A FROZEN WAR

CLAUDE SEALEY

LEADING STOKER

BORN IN 1923, SEALEY SERVED ON HMS JASON AND WITNESSED RUSSIAN BRUTALITY AGAINST THEIR OWN PEOPLE, AS WELL AS SURVIVING GERMAN ATTACKS AND A TERRIFYING STORM

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE CONVOY YOU WERE PART OF IN 1943 AND THE STORM YOU ENCOUNTERED?

In early February, we were issued with warm clothing but we didn't realise we were going on a Russian convoy. We went up to Loch Ewe, which was where the convoy was sitting waiting. There were around 30 ships and it was so bleak. I thought "Oh, my goodness!" but before we knew where we were, we set sail.

We had a rough voyage and they said it was the worst storm recorded in the North Sea at that time. I was down in the boiler rooms and we had a 'port sea' where the water was coming into the ship from the left side and we nearly turned over. I was scared, the ship went right over and all the lights went out. I don't know how many degrees it turned but it didn't right itself for a long time and we all thought, "This is it." It eventually recovered but the storm lasted for four days, it was terrible.

WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE TO BE REPEATEDLY ATTACKED BY THE GERMANS?

It was horrible. They used to come from Norway with both air and U-boat attacks. We were a 'rescue ship' so we were right at the back of the convoy. If any part of the convoy got hit, those who worked on the upper decks knew what was happening but we didn't get any information down below. I was annoyed about [that].

We didn't get hit but there was one episode where we were astern of the convoy at night when we got an order for full speed ahead. There was panic in the engine room as somebody on lookout saw a U-boat overtaking us on the surface. We dropped a full pack of depth charges over them when they swerved because you couldn't turn any lights on. We didn't know whether we sunk it or not. There were a few more attacks afterwards and we were a bit concerned because they were mainly targeting the merchant ships. However, once we approached Russia, we were distracted because we started to ice up.

DID YOU FEEL VULNERABLE WORKING BELOW DECKS?

Because I was often in the boiler room, people have said, "I bet you were warm" but we were freezing cold. I'd be in there wearing my overcoat like everybody else. I felt vulnerable in there but most of the time I didn't think about it because we were all busy. We just had to adapt and get on with it.

WHAT WERE CONDITIONS LIKE WHEN THE CONVOY REACHED RUSSIA?

We reached a little naval base called Polyarny. When we came out on deck there was snow and ice everywhere and the first thing I saw was a funeral. There were these black figures carrying a coffin so that didn't cheer us up, it was awful.

Afterwards, we carried on near to Murmansk where we provided anti-aircraft protection while the cargo boats were unloaded. German bombers used to come over a hill, drop a few bombs and then head straight off. They were quick so that we couldn't respond in time as they mainly targeted the merchant ships. That wasn't very nice and there was many a time when I ran out of the bathroom and race to the engine room in the nude. That's how it was.

We arrived in Russia at the end of February 1943 and we didn't leave until August, which was disappointing because we thought we'd go straight back. One day I came out of the engine room in August and went out on deck at Archangel. I saw all these old men, women and children crying out for us to take them. They knew we were leaving that day to return to the UK, the poor devils were treated so badly by their own people, I remember there was one old man who stole a loaf of bread and they just came out and shot him and chucked his body in a lorry. It was as bad as that and commissars sometimes chased us.

HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE CONVOYS?

I think the convoys were a worthwhile thing to do because it helped the Russians. They reckon it was all our tanks and aircraft that we took up there that helped to win the war. The Russians did make their own equipment when they attacked Germany and pushed them back, but before that it was all our stuff that went up there. It was well worth it, there was no doubt about it.

"THERE WAS ONE OLD MAN WHO STOLE A LOAF OF BREAD AND THEY JUST CAME OUT AND SHOT HIM AND CHUCKED HIS BODY IN A LORRY"

The ruins of Murmansk after a bombing raid. Sealey remembers the Russian port as "a disheartening place"



Left: After convoy duties, Sealey took part in the initial naval assault on D-Day and was later wounded during a friendly-fire incident when 117 Royal Navy personnel were killed

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merchant ships sunk by U-boats and bombers. A torpedo malfunction caused Trinidad to cripple itself while attempting to sink a damaged German destroyer. Two lifeboats got away from the doomed Induna, with badly burned men, but hypothermia quickly finished off the injured and seven died in the first night. In desperate conditions, the boat's fresh water froze. One lifeboat was found with one man from nine still alive. Of the 64-man crew, 24 were rescued, 18 of whom lost limbs to frostbite.

The following month, PQ-14 was mauled. HMS Edinburgh fought off a German destroyer attack, but Empire Howard was torpedoed, the engine room staff blown to bits as the ammo cargo exploded. 40 others jumped into the sea and all but nine succumbed to blast injuries when a trawler tried to depth-charge an attacking U-boat.

Later in April, PQ-15 saw the destroyer Punjabi cut in half when it crossed the bows of battleship King George V, also damaged when the destroyer's depth charges exploded. Matters didn't improve on later homeward trips, where six ships were lost on QP-13, after straying into a British minefield off Iceland.

In theory, the convoys were better protected from April, as the first CAM ships were introduced, affording primitive air cover. These were merchantmen with a catapult Hurricane, the pilot parachuting into the sea after one sortie. In theory he had, at best, a 50/50 chance of rescue before freezing.



British Royal Navy ships passing through Arctic fog while on convoy duty in the Northern Waters, January 1945

“ONE LIFEBOAT WAS FOUND, WITH ONE MAN FROM NINE STILL ALIVE. OF THE 64-MAN CREW, 24 WERE RESCUED, 18 OF WHOM LOST LIMBS TO FROSTBITE”

Churchill rejected Royal Navy pleas to suspend summer convoys as he tried to placate Stalin, who raged against the Allies for delaying the Second Front. In the meantime, losses suffered by the Arctic Convoys cut little ice with him. The prime minister wanted PQ-16 in May, even if only half the ships got through; he feared the political consequences of cancellation. The supplies delivered over 1941 and 1942 were mostly of symbolic significance, a key indicator of the Western Allies' determination to support Russia.

PQ-16 seemed to vindicate Churchill with five-sixths of the convoy reaching Murmansk.

Showing this was a joint effort, Polish destroyer Garland took shocking casualties, but made it with “Long Live Poland!” scrawled on the ship's superstructure in the crew's blood. As one Merchant Navy officer acknowledged: “They were hard men.” 371 were rescued from lost ships in astonishing feats of courage and skill, but how long the merchantmen could be asked to continue was a moot point. One Royal Navy senior officer warned the Admiralty that while his men were paid to do this job, they were asking too much of the Merchant Navy.

The RN suffered too though, cruisers Trinidad and Edinburgh were lost on return trips in May.

THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH CAPE

DECEMBER 1943: AN ILL-JUDGED SORTIE BY THE GERMAN BATTLESHIP SCHARNHORST SAW IT SUNK IN THE BATTLE OF THE NORTH CAPE

Hitler refused to sanction warship attacks until Scharnhorst was let off its leash in December 1943, slipping out of Altenfjord to attack convoy JW55B. With Tirpitz laid up following an attack by midget-sub, it was likely Scharnhorst would attack the convoys as Hitler needed to stem the flow of supplies to Russia.

The heavily-armoured pocket-battleship – with nine 27-centimetre guns, gross tonnage of 38,000 and top-speed of 31 knots – missed its quarry due to poor visibility and then became separated from its own destroyer escort.

Scharnhorst was unaware that a Royal Navy long-range protection group was trailing it. The British fleet was led by the battleship, the Duke of York, along with cruiser Jamaica and four destroyers. The first intercept occurred early on Boxing Day, the British strategy being for the cruiser and destroyers to hold Scharnhorst at bay until Duke of York was ready to press home its attack. Above all else, it shouldn't be allowed to wriggle out of the net.

Norfolk took out one of Scharnhorst's radio sets with a shell, but the German ship turned-tail and looked like it would out-run its adversaries as it tried to flee for Norway.

It was the evening of the same day by the time the British ships caught up with their quarry for the final time and the main battle commenced. According to one eyewitness aboard Scorpion, it was this ship that fired the torpedoes that slowed the leviathan up. Duke of York came up behind, with a pair of destroyers to port and another pair to starboard.

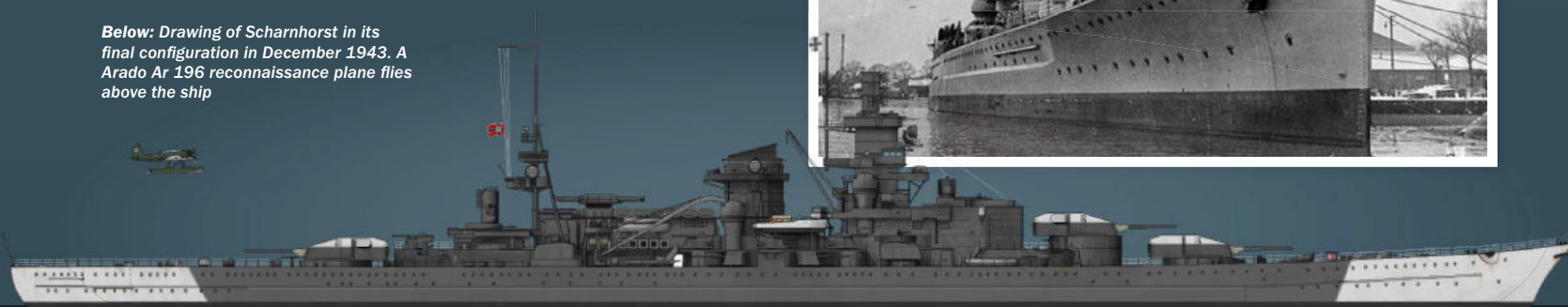
Below: Drawing of Scharnhorst in its final configuration in December 1943. A Arado Ar 196 reconnaissance plane flies above the ship

Duke of York opened fire at ten kilometres and after about 90 minutes of gunnery exchange, it became clear that Scharnhorst's speed was slowing. The final gun battle lasted for about an hour with the German ship finally losing power. Allegedly unsinkable from gunfire, it was finished off with torpedoes, 11 direct hits were registered. Although an Arctic ‘fret’ obscured the view, a terrific explosion confirmed the ship had gone.

Scharnhorst was claimed by the same ocean depths it had consigned so many other vessels to, sinking with the loss of all but 36 of 1,968. Scorpion rescued more than 30, who were taken back to Scapa Flow. In one fell-swoop, the worst remaining menace to the Arctic Convoys had gone. The following day, an ecstatic Churchill telegraphed Stalin with the news. The wreck of Scharnhorst was discovered in September 2000, lying upside down in approximately 290 metres of water.



German battleship Scharnhorst in harbour when first completed. Note the ship's badge mounted on its bow

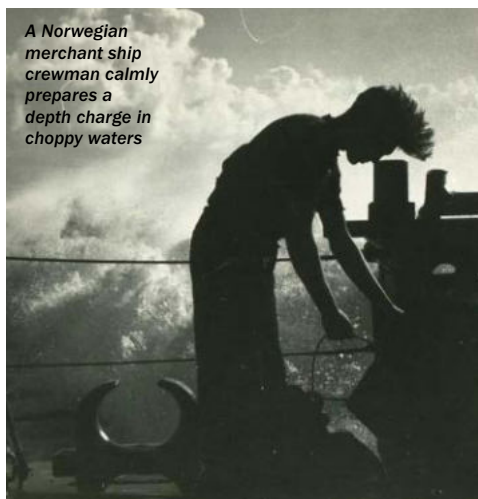


**"A FEW STARK NUMBERS
DO NOT CONVEY THOUGH
THE COURAGE OF THE
MEN WHO FOUGHT THEIR
WAY ACROSS THOSE
INHOSPITABLE SEAS"**

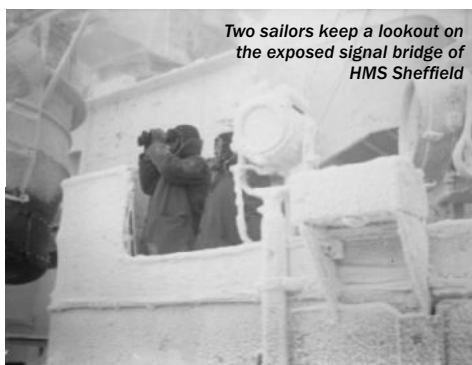
*The British destroyer HMS Faulkner
laying down a smoke screen to obscure
the convoy on its way to Russia*



*A Norwegian
merchant ship
crewman calmly
prepares a
depth charge in
choppy waters*



*Two sailors keep a lookout on
the exposed signal bridge of
HMS Sheffield*



*Black smoke billows after a
Grumman Avenger crashed on
the flight deck of HMS Tracker*



It seems invidious to single out one individual, but on the Trinidad, engineer officer Lieutenant John Boddy, refused to abandon his stokers. Although concussed by a bomb blast, he was last seen trying to free them from beneath jammed hatches.

If one convoy epitomised the gauntlet though, it was PQ-17 in June 1942, the largest yet sent. It became one of the greatest naval disasters of WWII, and as such, was veiled in secrecy. The convoy assembled at Hvalfjord in Iceland, with 36 ships, mostly American, and sailed on 27 June with more than 150,000 tons of military and general stores, including nearly 600 tanks, 300 planes and more than 4,000 other vehicles. British codebreakers warned the Admiralty that the Germans intended a major effort against it, including capital ships. Finally, Hitler intended to hit the convoys hard.

Faulty intelligence suggested the Tirpitz, Admiral Hipper and Admiral Scheer had left Trondheim to engage, and on 3 July, the Admiralty ordered its cruisers to turn west towards the perceived threat. The next day the convoy was ordered to 'scatter', a decision that saw two-thirds of its ships sunk by aircraft and U-boats, with the loss of nearly 100,000 tons

of material and 153 merchant seamen. No British warships were lost. The abandonment of the convoy left a lasting mistrust within the merchant service, at a time when morale was already precarious. After this, summer convoys were suspended; Stalin was unimpressed.

The next convoy, PQ-18, did not sail until September, but still lost a third of 40 ships, ten to air attack. Among naval ratings and merchant seamen, there was now general agreement that the Arctic Convoys were the war's worst naval ordeal. Some men remained forever traumatised. To try to cut losses, the winter of 1942 saw some single, unescorted merchantmen making the trip. Five out of 13 arrived in Murmansk.

Arrival was no party. The Kola Inlet, the fjord leading to the port, was likened to hell – if it was possible for hell to be that cold – with Luftwaffe attacks on Murmansk occurring almost daily. Russian hospitality was lukewarm, but as they could proffer, they were repaying with Russian lives.

Come the end of 1942, the coding changed, 'JW' an outbound convoy and 'RA' homebound. Losses fell dramatically, as, at last, the Royal Navy could deploy escort carriers and powerful

anti-submarine and anti-aircraft defences. The Germans meanwhile, hard-pressed elsewhere, diverted resources and later lost their most potent capital ship, Scharnhorst. This 'triple-whammy' helped the Allies. The Arctic route lost some criticality as America began delivering supplies to Russia via the Pacific and Persia.

Come the end, more than 4 million tons of supplies had arrived, everything from tanks, aircraft and trucks to tractors, telephone wire, railway engines and boots. The most important contribution, however, was political, as the Western Allies demonstrated commitment to Russia. A significant portion of Germany's air and naval forces was also tied up.

The human cost? One could argue it was small compared to other battlefields; 18 warships and 87 merchantmen lost, with around 830 merchant seamen and almost 2,000 naval personnel.

A few stark numbers do not convey though the courage of the men who fought their way across those inhospitable seas; the worst journey in the world.

2013 saw the long overdue award of a campaign medal, the Arctic Star; sadly too late for many brave mariners.

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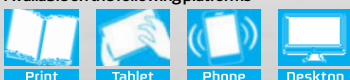


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Heroes of the Medal of Honor

ALONZO H CUSHING

At the critical moment of Gettysburg, one man refused to give any ground

WORDS DAVID A NORRIS

More than 12,000 Confederate infantrymen, in a battle line 2.4 kilometres wide, strode up the long slopes of Cemetery Ridge south of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Breaking the stretch of mostly open farmland near the crest of the ridge was a little clump of trees. From a distance, the canopy of summer leaves atop the slender trunks and branches looked like an umbrella.

On 3 July 1863, 'the copse of trees' was the destination of the Confederate advance and the point where they intended to break through the lines of the Union Army. Just a few meters north of the copse waited what was left of Battery A, 4th United States Artillery. A handful of surviving regular artillerymen and some hastily pressed infantry, manned the battery's last two serviceable pieces. Losing blood from multiple wounds, 22-year-old battery commander Lieutenant Alonzo H Cushing peered through his spyglass at the approaching enemy troops. Hoarding his dwindling supply of ammunition, Cushing bade his men load their guns with canister and wait. When the seemingly inexorable enemy line drew within 365 metres, he gave the order to fire.

After defeating Major General Joseph Hooker's Army of the Potomac at the 1-3 May Battle of Chancellorsville, General Robert E Lee's Army of Northern Virginia tried to shift the course of the American Civil War with an invasion of the Union state of Pennsylvania. Replacing Hooker on 28 June, Major General George Gordon Meade led the Army of the Potomac north through Maryland and into Pennsylvania in pursuit of Lee.

Both armies collided by chance at the southern Pennsylvania town of Gettysburg on 1 July. Lee pushed the Union troops out of

Gettysburg itself, but they made a stand on Cemetery Ridge, south of the town.

About 3.2 kilometres long, Cemetery Ridge rises about 12 metres above the gently rolling countryside to the west. Shaped something like a fishhook – with the north end curling towards the east – the ridge connected to some higher hills at the north and south ends. Confederate attacks on the ridge continued through 2 July, but failed to break Meade's lines.

An all-or-nothing Confederate attack loomed on 3 July. This push, known as 'Pickett's Charge' (named for one of the attack's leaders, Major General George Pickett of Virginia), aimed at the Union right on Cemetery Ridge. Lee's infantry attack would bear down upon the section of line held by Major General Winfield Scott Hancock's Second Army Corps.

Anchoring a key section of Hancock's defences were the six seven-centimetre ordnance rifles of Lieutenant Alonzo Hersford Cushing's Battery A of the 4th United States Artillery. Cushing, an 1861-graduate of the US Military Academy, was one of four brothers who served in the Union Army. Most notable of his other siblings was Lieutenant William B Cushing of the US Navy, famous for daring missions including a commando-style raid that sank the ironclad CSS Albemarle in 1864.

Along the northern part of Cemetery Ridge, a low stone wall, no more than 76 centimetres in height, began west of a woodlot called Ziegler's Grove. This ran south for 236 metres before turning twice into a shape that became known as 'the Angle'.

Inside the stone wall, 91 metres south of the Angle, was a small copse of oak trees. Major Samuel Roberts of the 72nd Pennsylvania described it as, "...a clump of saplings, not more than 30 paces in depth" that, "...stood

out in relief from the ridge and afforded a most excellent target for the concentrated fire of the enemy's artillery." Between the Angle and the copse was Battery A. Their guns, parked roughly parallel with the line of the main wall from Zeigler's Grove, were about 76 metres from the wall that ran south from the Angle.

During the morning, enemy guns sent a sporadic fire against the Union line. About 8am, a shell exploded one of the limbers that belonged to Battery A. Within an instant, two more limbers were detonated by the blast.

At 1pm, as the Confederate infantry prepared for their advance, Colonel Edward P Alexander ordered the assembled artillery of the Confederate Army to open fire on the Union lines. As many as 150 or more Rebel guns, answered by about 80 Union cannon, began one of the largest bombardments yet seen during the American Civil War.

Many of the Confederate guns were aimed too high and their projectiles soared over the infantry and landed in the rear. Cushing's Battery, though, took a heavy pounding. Plunging into the Second Corps's artillery positions, shells whistled, screamed, and shrieked before their explosions wrecked guns or slaughtered men and horses. Some shots struck the walls along the Angle, adding cracked stone shrapnel to the iron fragments that spun through the air. More of Battery A's limbers were hit and their ammunition chests were disintegrated with ground-shaking explosions and clouds of sulphurous smoke.

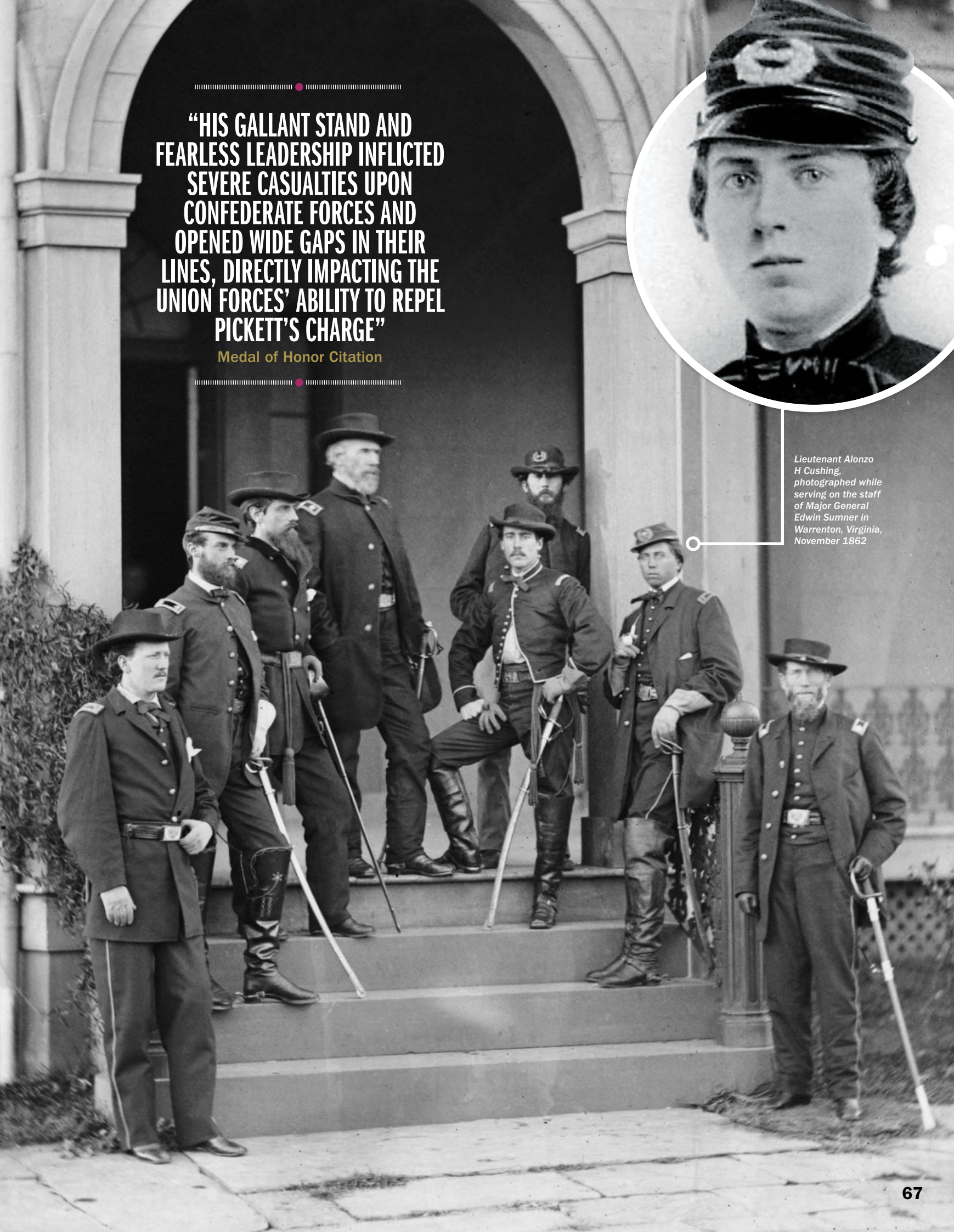
Lieutenant Cushing was hit early during the bombardment. Wounded in both thighs, he refused to leave the field. Incoming shells continued raising the toll of wrecked guns, dead horses and men in the Second Corps' batteries near the Angle. At 2pm Brigadier General

**"HIS GALLANT STAND AND
FEARLESS LEADERSHIP INFLICTED
SEVERE CASUALTIES UPON
CONFEDERATE FORCES AND
OPENED WIDE GAPS IN THEIR
LINES, DIRECTLY IMPACTING THE
UNION FORCES' ABILITY TO REPEL
PICKETT'S CHARGE"**

Medal of Honor Citation

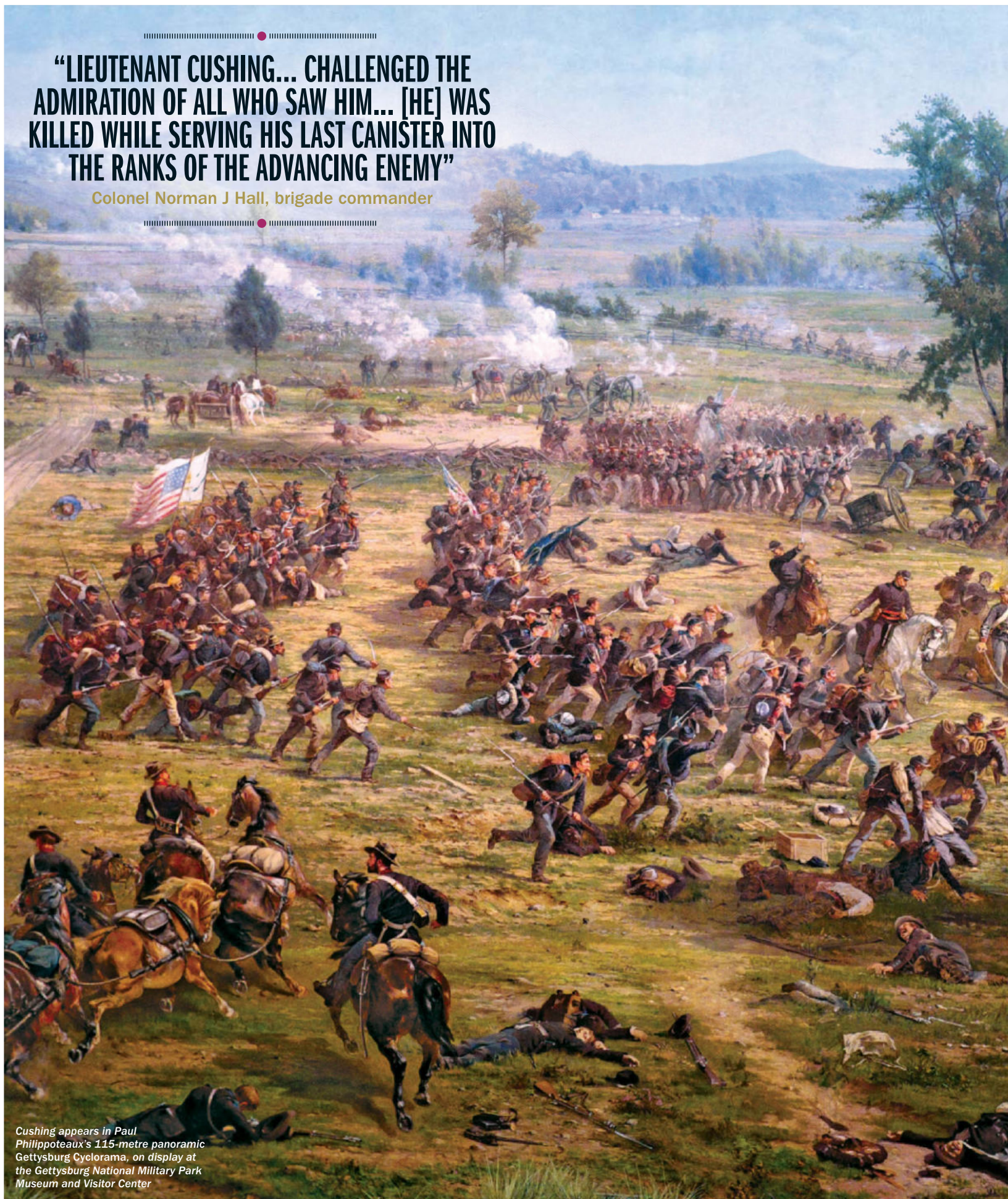


*Lieutenant Alonzo
H. Cushing,
photographed while
serving on the staff
of Major General
Edwin Sumner in
Warrenton, Virginia,
November 1862*



“LIEUTENANT CUSHING... CHALLENGED THE ADMIRATION OF ALL WHO SAW HIM... [HE] WAS KILLED WHILE SERVING HIS LAST CANISTER INTO THE RANKS OF THE ADVANCING ENEMY”

Colonel Norman J Hall, brigade commander



Cushing appears in Paul Philippoteaux's 115-metre panoramic Gettysburg Cyclorama, on display at the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center



Alexander S Webb sent for two batteries to replace Cushing's unit and a neighbouring battery from the 1st Rhode Island Artillery.

By 3pm, the Confederate gunners had fired away much of their irreplaceable ammunition. Colonel Alexander saw the enemy fire slacken as some battered Union artillery units pulled back from the ridge. Alexander advised that the infantry must advance now if they were going to move at all. The waiting Confederate generals gave the order and from Cemetery Ridge, Union troops spotted more than 12,000 southern infantrymen step into view from the line of woods below. They marched at a steady pace, their officers leading them on a course that threatened to engulf the batteries and regiments around the Angle. If successful, this massive charge would break the Union line on Cemetery Ridge and perhaps do the same to the Army of the Potomac and the Union's war effort.

A fresh New York battery arrived to fill the gap left by the Rhode Islanders to Cushing's right, but there were no replacements for Cushing by the time the Confederate advance was visible. The lieutenant had only enough men left to work two guns, and this was only possible by borrowing infantrymen from Webb's brigade. To confront the oncoming wave of rebel infantry, Battery A's two serviceable pieces were pushed forward to the stone wall, leaving a few metres of space ahead of the muzzles for the gunners to load the pieces.

Behind the wall was Company I of the 69th Pennsylvania. The foot soldiers were ordered to open a gap for the guns but before the Pennsylvanians could move aside, one of the guns accidentally discharged and blasting through Company I, the canister killed two men.

When the Rebels were within 365 metres of the Angle, Battery A began firing canister at the enemy. A shot hit Cushing's right shoulder, tearing off his epaulet.

Pushing up the slope, the Confederates were pelted by heavy musket and cannon fire, but pressed on to within 180 metres. Cushing's gunners now loaded double servings of canister. With a lanyard wrapped around his wrist, the lieutenant still fired one of his guns. Corporal Thomas Moon later recalled that by this time, the lieutenant's "right thumb was burned to the bone, serving vent without a thumbpad."

A moment later, the lieutenant was hit again and bled profusely from wounds in his abdomen and groin. Sergeant Frederick Fuger helped the officer to stand. Refusing Fuger's plea to leave the field, Cushing told him, "No. I stay right here and fight it out or die in the attempt."

When the enemy closed to within 90 metres of Battery A's guns, a minie ball

entered Cushing's mouth and tore out through the back of his skull. He died instantly. Fuger caught the lieutenant's body as he fell.

Led by Brigadier General Lewis Armistead, several score Confederate soldiers stepped over the wall and poured onto the ground surrounding the empty guns of Cushing's Battery. This surge, known as 'the high-water mark of the Confederacy', marked the furthest advance of the southern infantry at Gettysburg.

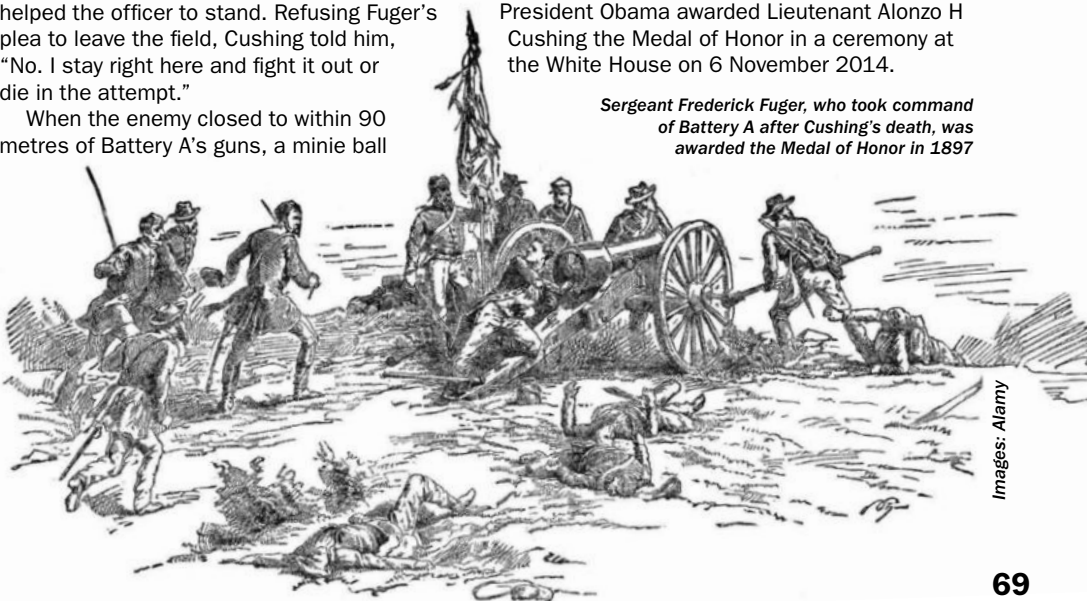
Armistead was mortally wounded as he laid his hand on the gun that Cushing had just fired for the last time. He fell only a few paces from the spot where Cushing died. Against the unrelenting loads of canister fired by Cushing and the neighbouring batteries, and the supporting musket fire of the Union infantry, only a small number of Confederates reached the Angle. Union soldiers rallied in greater numbers and stopped the southern push. The Confederates who were not shot down or captured were pushed back down the long slope to their original line.

Cemetery Ridge remained in Union hands. One day later, Lee ordered a retreat back toward Virginia. His army had escaped, but it would never again be able to mount such an aggressive offensive campaign.

Cushing's Battery paid heavily for their prominent role in the repulse of the Confederate attack of 3 July. One officer of the battery was wounded; Cushing and the only other officer were both dead. Seven enlisted men were dead and 38 wounded. Sergeant Fuger noted that nine of the battery's ammunition chests were blown up by enemy artillery, and "not a sound wheel was left" on the guns. Only seven of the battery's 90 horses were still alive.

Cushing was honoured with a posthumous promotion to lieutenant-colonel. However, nearly 150 years would pass before Lieutenant Cushing received the Medal of Honor. Created during the American Civil War in 1862, the Medal of Honor was intended to recognise the exceptional bravery of enlisted personnel on the battlefield. In the 1860s, officers were typically recognised for valour with regular or brevet (honourary) promotions. Cushing was not forgotten, though. In the late 1980s, lawmakers and citizens of Wisconsin, Cushing's native state, began a campaign for a posthumous presentation of the medal to officially recognise Cushing's exceptional role at Gettysburg. Their efforts bore fruit when President Obama awarded Lieutenant Alonzo H Cushing the Medal of Honor in a ceremony at the White House on 6 November 2014.

Sergeant Frederick Fuger, who took command of Battery A after Cushing's death, was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1897



BRIEFING

Ethiopia's civil war

Marked by famine and strife, this African nation's redemption was supposedly fulfilled. But why is the continent's crown jewel ready to fall apart?

WORDS MIGUEL MIRANDA

Brooding upon the Horn of Africa, spread over jagged mountains and grass-swept plains, is perhaps the oldest nation on Earth. When humankind awoke from its rude cradle, millennia before recorded history, the place we now call Ethiopia was their garden. Harsh yet bountiful, the land's geography was a haven for early farmers and proud kings.

Today, decades after the turmoil of a ruthless Marxist dictatorship, Ethiopia could be teetering on the brink as its citizens wrestle with an inflexible one-party state. But to understand Ethiopia's discord, one must recognise the four salient features of its historical fabric.

First, with an Orthodox Christian heritage influencing its society for at least 1,800 years, a long-standing and functional Ethiopian state makes it one of the most sophisticated and powerful cultures in the African continent.

Second, Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic country where politics revolves around affiliation with the three largest minorities: the Amhara, Oromo or Tigrayan blocs. During the 19th century, the centralisation of government power in the capital of Addis Ababa secured the Amharan domination over warriors, trade routes and taxation. Today, the ruling EPRDF, or Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, is seen as a Tigrayan monopoly.

Third, Ethiopia is unique for its martial heritage. It was a regional power in the Red Sea before the advent of Islam in the 7th century, it successfully resisted European colonisation during the great scramble for Africa and it defeated an Italian-led invasion in 1896. Four decades later, the country

fought a conventional war with Fascist Italy, but lost against its technologically superior foe. During the Cold War, Ethiopia swung from Washington's orbit to Moscow's, all while fighting Africa's most vicious civil war.

Today the Ethiopian military has an active role in peacekeeping, with a continuous deployment in Somalia, and is seen as an emerging regional power once more.

Fourth, Ethiopia's climate has always been conducive to agriculture. This has given it a long record of husbandry and farming, the impact of which on the country's social advancement is nothing less than enormous. But without access to the sea and erratic rainfall, the entire country is always at risk from drought and, with the ravages of war and politics, famine too.

When surveying Ethiopia's journey in the modern age, it is best to start with the indelible political figure, Haile Selassie. Born on 23 July 1892, the young prince was first accorded a very grandiose name, Ras Tafari, or the 'revered prince', at a time when Ethiopia was successfully resisting the encroachment of European imperialism.

After manoeuvring himself a clear path to the throne throughout his early manhood, Ras Tafari inaugurated his reign as the Negusa Nagast (an ancient title that means the 'King of Kings') Haile Selassie.

When Ethiopia was lost to the Italians in 1936, Emperor Selassie's rule came to an abrupt end. But he fell in with the Allies by default when the British dismantled Italy's dominion over East Africa, seizing Somaliland, Italian-controlled Eritrea and the emperor's capital in 1941. Once again, Ethiopia was whole and free.



"TODAY, DECADES AFTER THE TURMOIL OF A RUTHLESS MARXIST DICTATORSHIP, ETHIOPIA COULD BE TEETERING ON THE BRINK AS ITS CITIZENS WRESTLE WITH AN INFLEXIBLE ONE-PARTY STATE"

THE FALL OF AFRICA'S JEWEL

4th century

Orthodox Christianity penetrates East Africa and finds new converts in the ancient kingdom of Aksum. Its king, Azana, embraces the faith and establishes the royal bloodline's fealty to the cross.

1889

With France in the Sahara and Britain dominating the Nile, a resurgent Italy seizes a part of the Red Sea's African coast. This territory later becomes Eritrea.

1896

2,000 years of unbroken independence is nearly shattered when an Italian-led army invades Ethiopia. The Italians' poor intelligence and bad tactics allows King Menelik II's victory at the Battle of Adowa.

*A local man shoulders
his weapon in the Simien
Mountains. This region's
infrastructure was severely
damaged in the war*



The African giant

True to its exceptional heritage, Ethiopia was unlike other African countries in the new global peace following World War II. There was neither a colonial yoke to be rid of, nor was a national character lacking among its people. Its ruler, the Emperor Selassie, stood a giant among statesmen. Dignified and weathered by the rigours of history, his kingdom was among the largest in the continent and was a heroic model for subject peoples everywhere.

It's worth mentioning how the emperor's very existence as a king of kings, endowed with divine right and ancient Christian tradition, succoured a counter-cultural Rastafarian movement in faraway Jamaica that would go on to influence the world's art and music.

Even in terms of strategy and geopolitics, Ethiopia's blessings were generous. Grateful to the Allies for restoring his monarchy, the Emperor Selassie fostered strong ties with Washington, DC and a string of American presidents. The nature of their relationship, of course, was transactional. In return for generous aid and superbly-equipped armed forces (paid for by Uncle Sam), specialists were allowed to maintain facilities in Ethiopia – to better observe Arab states who might be swayed by the looming Soviet Union.

Another boon for the emperor was additional territory, one with access to the sea, that expanded his rule. With British-controlled Eritrea in limbo for several years, the United Nations decided on a federation with its large southern neighbour. Though disastrous in hindsight, it did serve a higher purpose, albeit not for anyone's specific benefit. The truth was that the US was keen on listening posts along the Red Sea, and substantial American lobbying carried out by the State Department prevailed at the UN, resulting in an Ethiopian-Eritrean federation on 15 September 1952.

It was all downhill from there. Far from a democratic state with multi-ethnic sensitivities, the imperial administration from Addis Ababa turned Eritrea into a colony for the emperor's benefit. This translated to government efforts suppressing local languages and customs, along with a total lack of political representation. Little wonder then a Marxist-tinged nationalist backlash manifested in an underground 'Liberation Front' organised by Eritrean expatriates who didn't hesitate taking up arms. An actual war began in earnest by 1962 and unlike post-colonial struggles everywhere else, the Eritreans were fighting against another African state.

While the revolt did begin on a shoestring budget, it did receive external support over many years from both Arab states (Muammar Gaddafi's Libya and Sudan, for example) and moral support by radical Marxist groups. It's worth pointing out how the Eritreans weren't

united in mind or purpose. By the late 1960s, there were two competing factions: the Eritrean Liberation Front and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, who fought each other rather than uniting to eject the Ethiopians.

However, the rebellion was successful enough at eroding Addis Ababa's control over Eritrea, whose difficult geography suited the rebels, since its military had neither the resources nor the firepower to suppress a territory of its size.

A country falling apart

The sorry state of the Ethiopian armed forces, together with economic stagnation, so weakened the court at Addis Ababa that the coup d'état in 1974 was hardly a surprise in retrospect.

Like many developing countries, the putschists were ideologues in uniform wanting to restore and rebuild a homeland they believed had gone astray. In the final years of Emperor Selassie's reign, inept policies worsened the effects of drought on the country's vital agricultural sector and the Eritrean war undermined the central government's authority to a worrying extent.

The emperor was possibly murdered in his palace and with his death, news of which was suppressed, Ethiopia's almost 2,000-year-old dynastic tradition ended.

Two years passed under a ruling junta called the Derg (the acronym for Co-ordinating Committee for the Armed Forces, the Police, and the Territorial Army) before one of its members, Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, emerged as its sole leader. A man of baffling contradictions, Mengistu's life was shaped by his country's warm relations with the US. Trained by the US Army, his personal sympathies with the civil rights movements sweeping the US caused a personal conversion to Marxism.

Once in power, Mengistu envisioned a vibrant worker's state that would serve as a model for Africa and the developing world. In reality, however, the Derg regime carried out a ruthless internal purge, a so-called 'Red Terror', that hollowed out Addis Ababa's intelligentsia, namely licensed professionals and journalists.

Two powerful shocks, however, served to undermine the Derg and its ambitions. The first was the struggle for the Ogaden. Ethiopia being a multi-ethnic state, its eastern border was populated by Somalis. In 1977, the Soviet-backed regime of Siad Barre in Somalia decided to annex the region by force of arms. They believed the Derg's internal cohesion was in disarray and its support from the Americans had disappeared.

The invasion, launched on the pretext of helping local guerrillas, was a success



Above:
A local resident walks past a disabled T-62 tank, left stranded outside the Presidential Palace following a battle between rebel forces and the government



The ruthlessness of the Derg regime against the Eritreans was so unbearable that thousands fled to neighbouring war-torn Sudan

A desert chief prepares to leave his village to fight in the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, October 1935



1930

With his country menaced by hostile neighbours, the 38-year-old Ras Tafari ascends the throne and is crowned Emperor Haile Selassie. He is Africa's sole remaining independent head of state.

1935

On 5 October 1935, a 125,000-strong army under General Emilio de Bono invades Ethiopia and overwhelms the kingdom's northern frontier. The League of Nations declares a useless arms embargo.

1936

Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa falls to the Italians after several months of one-sided battles. For the first time in its long history, the land of Aksum is under foreign occupation.

1941

Striking from Somaliland, British and Allied forces roll back the Italians in East Africa for the rest of 1940. On 5 May 1941, Emperor Selassie returns to a liberated Addis Ababa.



1952

Under pressure from the United States, the United Nations cedes Eritrea to an Ethiopian federation ruled by Emperor Haile Selassie. Social and economic inequalities between the territories begin to simmer.

"THE FIRST STEP WAS DEPLOYING 100,000 TROOPS IN AND AROUND ASMARA WITH EXPRESS ORDERS TO FAN OUT AND TERRORISE THE COUNTRYSIDE"



By 1991, government forces were spent and the rebels occupied the capital of Addis Ababa

at first, but Siad Barre's commanders had miscalculated the calibre of their adversaries. Not only did the Ethiopian armed forces put up a serious fight, but the Derg and Mengistu's diplomatic overtures had brought the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc on their side.

In what was perhaps the most stunning reversal in modern African warfare, thousands of Cuban troops were airlifted from Angola to join the fight against the Somali invaders. Always generous patrons, Soviet fighter jets, tanks and howitzers quickly bolstered the Derg's firepower. By 1978, the Somalis were ejected from the Ogaden and Ethiopia was once more intact and powerful.

Despite winning the war, a lasting peace didn't hold. Arms smuggled from Sudan and the Middle East continued to reach the Eritrean rebels, whose ranks had coalesced under the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) after years of in-fighting.

What enabled the Eritreans to keep prosecuting the war for so long wasn't just a profound militant nationalism but superb tactics. Their military organisation was ironclad and, coupled with a small logistical footprint, the EPLF's units could function independently, to devastating effect.

As soon as the Ogaden war was over, the Derg began a long series of campaigns to smother the restive Eritreans. The first step was deploying 100,000 troops in and around the city of Asmara with express orders to fan out and terrorise the countryside. When this didn't work, Mengistu personally directed the mass-mobilisation of young men to form a national militia. The most desperate recourse was to recruit thousands of rural farmers and entice them with promises of land – land that was taken from Eritreans.

It didn't and in 1982, thanks to unfailing Soviet support, the Derg had built one of Africa's largest and best-equipped armies. This was unleashed on the Eritreans as Red Star, its name meant to contrast the US's Bright Star exercises in Egypt, and was a pitiless campaign of bombing and wanton destruction.

An ignominious achievement of the Red Star campaign was the Ethiopian air force's role at terrorising the Eritrean population. More than just air strikes on guerrilla columns, Ethiopian jets harassed and attacked villages, farms, people and any suspected rebel site with total impunity. This was so effective that it laid waste to Eritrea's rural economy and drove thousands into neighbouring Sudan as refugees.

A lasting consequence of the Derg's total war approach on internal dissent was to change how the world perceived Africa. As the burden of chronic warfare increased, a rising human toll, coupled with drought, caused a long-term famine that ravaged whole provinces, including the Tigray region near Eritrea.

1961

Young revolutionaries organise the ELF and launch a guerrilla war to free their homeland. The movement is soon beset by factionalism among its members and breaks apart.

1974

The aging sovereign Emperor Selassie is toppled from power by a coup d'état. Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam assumes leadership of the new Derg regime and aligns with the Soviet Union.

1975

With Emperor Selassie presumed dead, Mengistu's Derg regime launches the 'Red Terror' to purge the government's critics. In 1992, a corpse found beneath the toilets of the former royal palace is discovered to be that of the late emperor.

1977

Ruled by Siad Barre, Somalia invades the Ogaden region to annex the territory. With Soviet help, the Derg emerge victorious the following year.

1984

The ravages of chronic warfare, economic collapse and forced collectivisation lead to a pitiless famine in northern Ethiopia. International media coverage inspires an outpouring of aid and publicity for the Derg.

1991

With Addis Ababa falling to a coalition of rebel groups, the Derg regime disintegrates. This paves the way for Eritrean victory and the State of Eritrea gains full independence by 1993.

A long and twisting path

When the BBC revealed the extent of the crisis in 1984, after a TV crew spent weeks in the town of Korem, the appalling imagery triggered an international outcry. The humanitarian resurgence may have left an indelible mark on the decade’s pop culture, with the celebrity single *We Are The World* in 1985, but it also did irreparable harm to Africa’s image and politics.

By the mid-1980s, almost \$1 billion in grain, medicine and financial assistance was siphoned into East Africa. While it saved lives, it also set a ridiculous pattern of western financial patronage for failed states, patronage that never materialised into precious ‘development’. More importantly, it gave the Derg, along with other criminal regimes, licence to operate without accountability. It was a mistake that left the West ill-prepared to deal with later tragedies in Rwanda and Sudan.

The twin forces of constant warfare and famine were powerful enough to undo Mengistu and the Derg. With Soviet support dwindling under Mikhail Gorbachev and fresh Eritrean victories in Afabet and near Keren, Addis Ababa had to scramble for new allies on the global stage. At first, a brief liaison with China seemed promising but offered few tangible benefits. The regime then reached out to Israel, to little avail, and in desperation, a brief economic partnership with North Korea proved beneficial for the domestic arms industry but couldn’t save the Derg from its enemies.

Mengistu fled the country in 1991 when Tigrayan, Oromo and Amhara rebels seized the capital. He would spend the rest of his life as an exiled guest in Zimbabwe, a surviving relic from a bygone era. Being reduced to total obscurity meant reports of his death between 2013 and 2014 couldn’t even be verified.

The fall of the Derg gave the Eritreans enough momentum for their own fighters to seize Asmara. Battered and ruined, a new country came to exist and in 1993, the UN recognised its independence under the leadership of Isaias Afwerki and his government, the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ).

Several years of uneasy peace between the two states was broken in 1998 when a border dispute led to full-scale war. Asmara and Addis Ababa, now led by governments who used to be allied against the Derg, were unwilling to compromise at the negotiating table. With little foreign support and fledgling economies, both countries raised 500,000 soldiers and fought viciously over a few dusty kilometres.

Much of the combat in the subsequent three years saw pointless bloodshed. In one particular battle, Eritrea accused Ethiopia of using human wave tactics, causing 70,000 casualties over a three-week period. Eritrea, who managed to scrape together enough



Over its many years, the civil war is thought to have claimed more than 1.4 million lives



The subjugation of Ethiopia by Fascist Italy from 1936-37 was a pyrrhic victory for Mussolini’s armies – they had to be kicked out by the British five years later

1998

An unresolved border dispute erupts in full-blown conventional war between Ethiopia and Eritrea who mobilise vast conscript armies. The ensuing three years of conflict leaves at least 100,000 dead.

2001

Asmara and Addis Ababa agree to a UN monitored ceasefire. Both countries sever diplomatic ties and try to destabilise each other in the ensuing years. However, Ethiopia prospers while Eritrea languishes.

2006

With full US support, the Ethiopian military enters Somalia on 28 December to oust Islamists who had taken control of Mogadishu. This begins a decade-long presence in the troubled country.

June 2014

Following a combined TTP and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan attack on Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, a new offensive is launched within Waziristan.

2015

After the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in 2012, the EPRDF cling to power and sweep national elections, securing 546 of 547 parliamentary seats.

2016

Battles erupt in June between Ethiopian and Eritrean forces. Both sides keep a lid on the actual circumstances of the fighting but at least 100 are suspected killed.



money for second-hand Su-27 and MiG-29 fighter jets, could have lost 100,000 men and women in the course of the fighting.

After a UN-brokered ceasefire ended hostilities in 2000, both countries engaged in what is best described as a miniature Cold War. Unfortunately, it seems Eritrea became the more extreme belligerent, with the Afwerki regime maintaining enforced conscription and doing little to advance economic growth. Eritrea is now ranked among the world's poorest countries and is suffering from a demographic exodus as its citizens flee for Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere.

Ethiopia hasn't grown into an exemplar of development either. Under the leadership of the EPRDF and the dynamic Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, it attracted massive Chinese investment in factories and infrastructure just as the national population ballooned to almost 100 million.

This remarkable partnership didn't mean Ethiopia was transforming into a fairer and

plural nation. When the government declared a six-month state of emergency in October 2016 to quell a popular uprising against the EPRDF, which many criticised as a organisation for corrupt Tigrayan politicians, it confirmed the status quo's dictatorial tendencies.

The Tigrays, after all, suffered persecution under the Derg regime, and these events showed how divided Ethiopia remained. The reason for the unrest was quite banal; the state planned to expand the capital's city limits into 1.1 million hectares of the Oromia Region, a move that put rural Oromo and Amhara communities at risk of losing their homes.

It's apparent one of Africa's most enduring and vibrant countries is still wracked by problems from within and without. But striking the right balance between cohesion and stability, where the late Emperor Selassie and the Derg failed, is the burden resting on the EPRDF's shoulders. Its leaders must carve a path to reconciliation, their survival as well as their country's depends on it.

AFRICA'S LONGEST WAR?

For almost 25 years, Ethiopia has maintained a tense rivalry with its neighbour Eritrea, and the antagonism is mutual. What used to be an Italian colonial project in the late-19th century fought a 30-year civil war from 1961-91 before its secession from Addis Ababa. A savage border conflict in 1998 and continued distrust sustain a feud that has no end in sight.



2016

Nationwide protests against the EPRDF's economic policies, including the forced displacement of citizens, are met with a brutal crackdown. The government declares a six-month state of emergency on 9 October.

October 2016

After 63 people are killed in an attack on a police college by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, the group claims it is working with IS in Pakistan.

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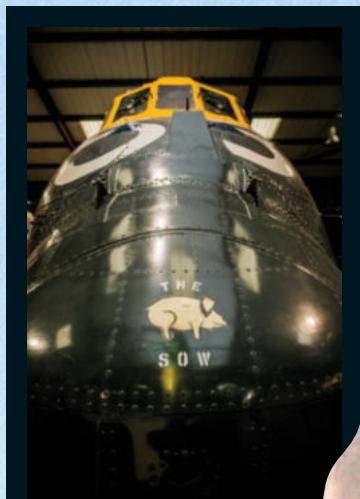
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MAXIMUM RANGE: 499 KILOMETRES
POWER: SINGLE NAPIER GAZELLE OR DUAL DE HAVILLAND GNOME GAS TURBINE ENGINES
ARMAMENT: ANTI-SUBMARINE DEPTH CHARGES OR TORPEDOES; 2 PINTLE-MOUNTED 7.62MM MACHINE GUNS; NORD ANTI-TANK MISSILES (VARIANT DEPENDENT)
CREW: 2



"THE WESSEX BECAME THE WORLD'S FIRST HELICOPTER EQUIPPED WITH A GAS TURBINE TO ENTER SERVICE IN LARGE NUMBERS"

During the mid-1950s, the Royal Navy's search for a helicopter capable of performing anti-submarine service, with potential for expanded roles, brought the Sikorsky S-58 to the forefront. Originally developed for the US Navy with the military designation of H-34, the helicopter entered US service in 1954. By 1956, Westland Aircraft, which became Westland Helicopters in 1961, had obtained a license to manufacture it. The

Below: On this Royal Navy owned Wessex the famed national roundel insignia partially visible at the lower right reveals the helicopter's sturdy construction



first pre-production Wessex helicopter flew in the first half of 1958.

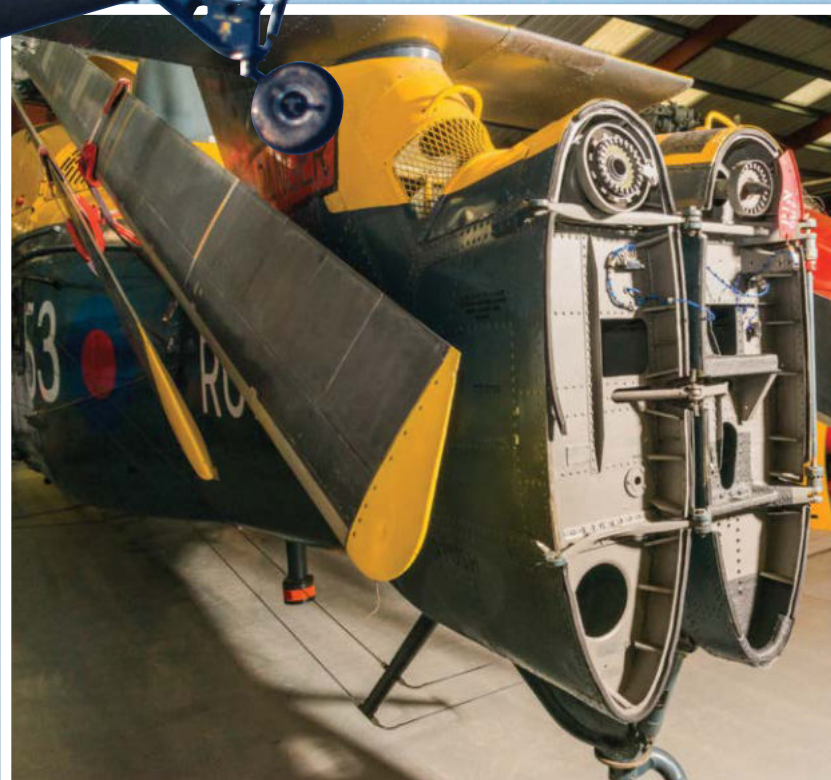
Originally the H-34 was a piston-engined turboshaft helicopter, however, Westland modified the airframe to accommodate a gas turbine powerplant. The Wessex became the world's first helicopter equipped with a gas turbine to enter service in large numbers. Its turbine system originally consisted of a single Napier Gazelle engine, which was followed by the introduction of twin de Havilland Gnome engines. Metal rotor blades were also strengthened to absorb heavier combat damage and remain operational.

The Wessex was subsequently adapted for service with the Royal Air Force, proving adept in several roles. These included search and rescue, cargo transportation and Special Operations troop deployment, as variants were developed for each function. Regarding its initial purpose, the Wessex could not comprehensively conduct each element of anti-submarine warfare since the required equipment and armament would exceed its optimal weight. It was fitted either with sonar hunting and tracking apparatus or armed with weaponry to deal with an identified threat. While the Wessex continued to serve in multiple capacities, the Royal Navy subsequently adopted the Westland Sea King for anti-submarine patrol duties.

A Westland Wessex of the RAF hovers during a mission. The RAF adopted the Wessex in 1962 with a caveat that its airframe accommodate twin gas turbine engines



Below: While undergoing restoration, the interior machinery and construction show a sturdy aircraft capable of continued operation in difficult conditions



Below: A pair of Wessexes operate from a recently cleared landing area amid dense jungle. It performed extremely well amid difficult terrain and climate conditions



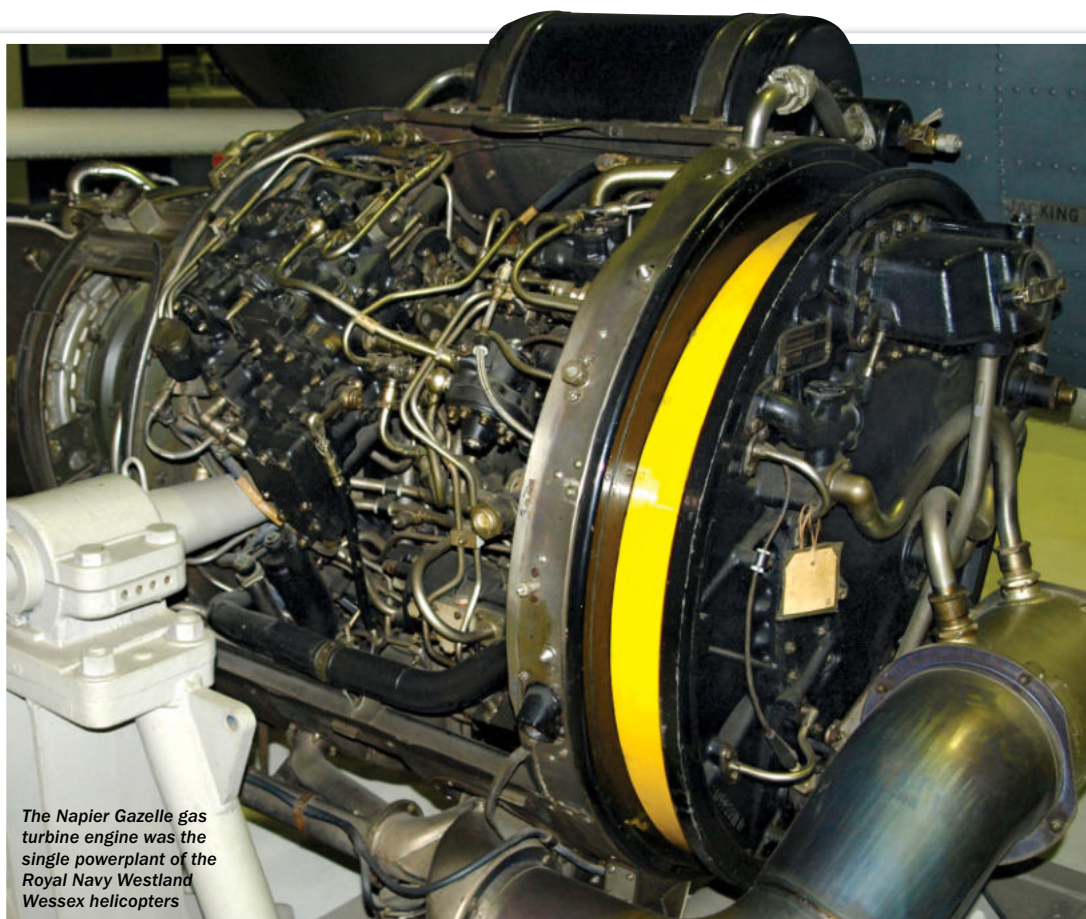
ENGINES

Two engines powered the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force Wessex variants. A single Napier Gazelle gas turbine powerplant generating 1,650 horsepower drove the Royal Navy Wessex HAS 1 and HAS 3 anti-submarine models. Developed by D Napier & Son, the Gnome entered production in the mid-1950s and was later built under a joint venture with Rolls-Royce.

The RAF required twin powerplants – using dual de Havilland Gnome gas turbine engines, producing 1,550 horsepower in their variants. A license-built version of the General Electric T-58 engine that entered production in 1958, the Gnome was later built by Bristol Siddeley and Rolls-Royce.

Below: Removable panels allowed mechanics easy access to the interior of the Westland Wessex. An engine mount, circuitry, and other equipment are visible in these photos

“THE RAF REQUIRED TWIN POWERPLANTS – USING DUAL DE HAVILLAND GNOME GAS TURBINE ENGINES, PRODUCING 1,550 HORSEPOWER”



The Napier Gazelle gas turbine engine was the single powerplant of the Royal Navy Westland Wessex helicopters



On the deck of a Royal Navy warship, combat ready troops rush to board a Westland Wessex helicopter. The Wessex performed well in the Falklands War of 1982, delivering troops and supplies to combat zones



“RAF HELICOPTERS, SUCH AS THE HC 2, CARRIED UP TO 16 COMBAT-READY TROOPS AND MOUNTED BROWNING MACHINE GUNS FOR PERIMETER SECURITY AND STRAFING”

Right: Soldiers board a Royal Navy Westland Wessex that is preparing for takeoff during training operations. Note the Union Jack painted on the nose of the helicopter

ARMAMENT

The naval HAS 1 was armed with torpedoes or depth charges to engage in the attack phase of anti-submarine warfare, while RAF helicopters, such as the HC 2, carried up to 16 combat-ready troops and mounted Browning machine guns for perimeter security and strafing. Ground attack versions mounted machine guns and up to four French-designed Nord SS-11 anti-tank missiles. The Royal Navy's HU 5 carried 16 Royal Marines along with up to four Browning machine guns, rocket launchers, torpedoes or Nord anti-tank or air-to-ground missiles.



The pictured Westland Wessex is on display at the Helicopter Museum, Weston-super-Mare. For more information visit: www.helicoptermuseum.co.uk



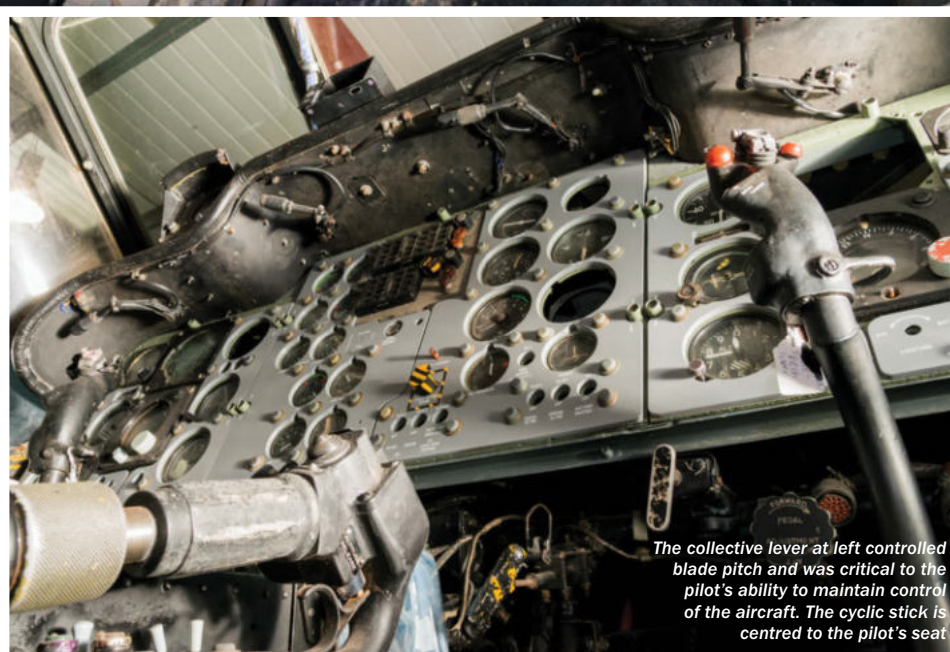
“THE WESTLAND WESSEX COCKPIT OFFERED PILOT AND CO-PILOT GOOD VISIBILITY AND A FORWARD CONSOLE WITH STANDARD INSTRUMENTATION”

Central to the forward console of the Westland Wessex cockpit was the attitude indicator, giving the pilot his position relative to an artificial horizon. Numerous gauges are situated around the space

COCKPIT

The Westland Wessex cockpit offered pilot and co-pilot good visibility and a forward console with standard instrumentation. In the centre, the attitude indicator gave the pilot his orientation relative to an artificial horizon. The altimeter and RPM gauge were located at the upper right above the vertical speed indicator and instrument landing system indicator.

The compass was situated directly below the attitude indicator, while the airspeed indicator and torquemeter were at the upper left with the trim release switch just below. The cyclic stick was positioned centrally to the pilot's seat with the collective lever, controlling blade pitch, at lower left.



The collective lever at left controlled blade pitch and was critical to the pilot's ability to maintain control of the aircraft. The cyclic stick is centred to the pilot's seat

Royal Navy Westland Wessex helicopters of 707 Naval Air Squadron are lined up at an airfield in preparation for takeoff



DESIGN

In the early 1950s, Sikorsky engineers began the development of the S-58 helicopter as a longer and more robust variant of its earlier S-55. Specifically intended for anti-submarine warfare, the S-58 airframe was modified with a tail dragger rear fuselage and landing gear. Its Wright Cyclone piston engine was nose

mounted with the drive shaft passing through the cockpit. In 1956, Westland procured a single S-58. Alterations were made to accommodate the lighter Napier Gazelle gas turbine engine. Weight redistribution was required, and the Wessex prototype flew within a few months. The RAF began operating the twin-engined Wessex in 1962.

SERVICE HISTORY

IN WAR AND PEACE, THE WESTLAND WESSEX COMPILED AN IMPRESSIVE RECORD DURING FOUR DECADES OF ROYAL NAVY AND RAF SERVICE

Nearly 400 Westland Wessex helicopters in at least a dozen variants were produced for the Royal Navy and RAF from 1958 to 1970. The service life of the Wessex extended until the last were retired from RAF service on the island of Cyprus in 2003. During its military career, the versatile Wessex was involved in anti-submarine, troop carrying and utility operations around the globe. The helicopter engaged in peacetime humanitarian rescue and relief efforts and joint military exercises, as well as frontline operations during wartime.

Initial combat service occurred in the early 1960s during an armed crisis in Indonesia. Wessex helicopters of the Royal Navy and RAF supported ground troops battling guerrilla forces. These aircraft performed cargo and transport missions with payloads up to 1,800 kilograms. The Wessex also patrolled the skies above Northern Ireland during periods of civil unrest.

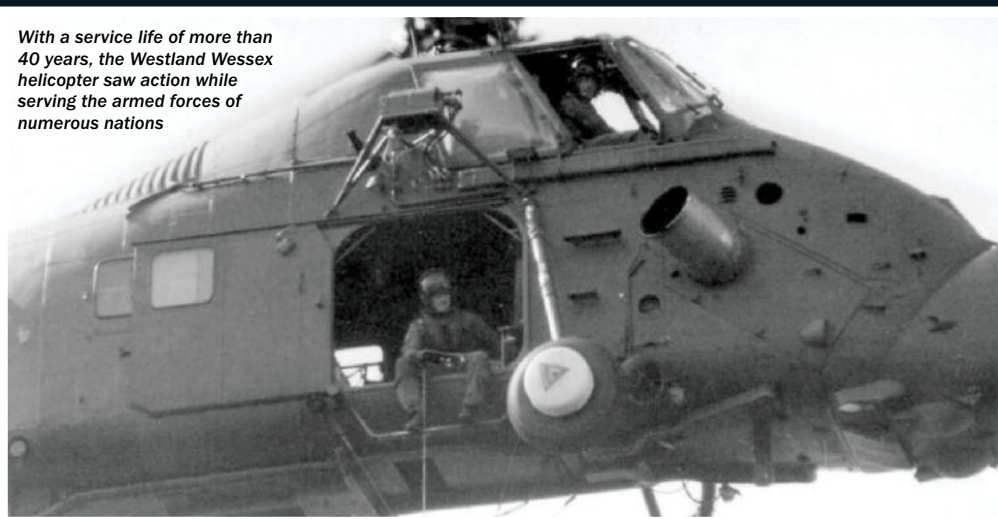
During the 1982 Falklands War, the Wessex delivered substantial support in utility and combat roles. Nine of the

helicopters were destroyed during the war, including six that sank with the container ship Atlantic Conveyor, which was turned into an inferno by two Argentine Exocet anti-ship missiles. Another was lost when an Exocet damaged the destroyer, HMS Glamorgan.

Perhaps the most heroic chapter of the type's wartime service occurred in the Falklands, when the crew of a Wessex nicknamed Humphrey, flying from the destroyer HMS Antrim, rescued numerous Special Forces troops and crewmen of two other Wessexes that had crashed in horrific weather on the Fortuna Glacier during a mission to observe Argentine movements. Humphrey crewmen also spotted the Argentine submarine Santa Fe and led the attack that caused the enemy to abandon ship. Humphrey was aboard Antrim when Argentine fighter jets strafed the vessel. Damage to its fuselage was patched with tape and the durable Wessex continued to operate.

“INITIAL COMBAT SERVICE OCCURRED IN THE EARLY 1960S DURING AN ARMED CRISIS IN INDONESIA. WESSEX HELICOPTERS OF THE ROYAL NAVY AND RAF SUPPORTED GROUND TROOPS BATTLING GUERRILLA FORCES”

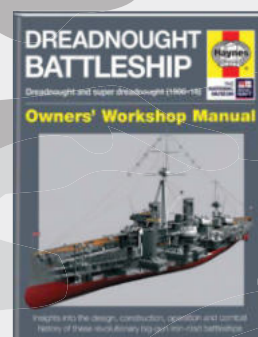
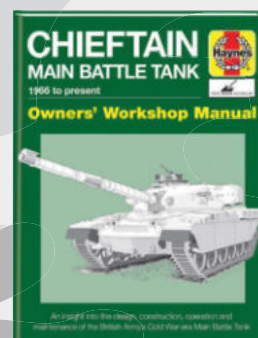
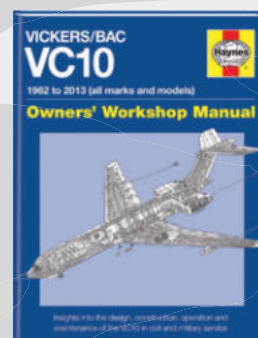
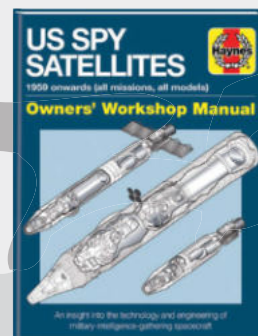
With a service life of more than 40 years, the Westland Wessex helicopter saw action while serving the armed forces of numerous nations



Images: Getty



A WORLD OF
**MILITARY
INFORMATION**



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WIND TALKERS

NATIVE AMERICAN CODE TALKERS OF THE WORLD WARS

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

During times of national emergency, Native Americans provided rapid, secure battlefield communication through codes derived from their complex languages

The history of the United States government and its relations with Native American peoples is one of treaties honoured and broken, lands taken and reserved, and difficult, sometimes sorrowful, conduct. Despite decades of strained interaction, when external threats arose during the world wars, Native Americans answered the call to duty, some of them serving in a unique, vital and war-winning way.

Native American code talkers, specially trained combat communications personnel, served during both World War I and World War II in Europe and the Pacific. Braving enemy fire and shunting away discrimination, racism and lack of opportunity, these men utilised codes derived from their native languages to transmit secure messages to and from the front lines with virtually unbreakable encryption. Frustrated enemy intelligence and codebreaking personnel were baffled, unable to crack the strange sounding intonations.

The code talkers phenomenon is most closely associated with the Navajo tribe and its service with the US Marine Corps during World War II in the Pacific, however, a generation earlier, Cherokee and Choctaw soldiers provided valuable service fighting the forces of Imperial Germany during World War I. After the Great War, the need for such skills lay dormant. However, with the rise of Japanese territorial ambitions in the Pacific during the 1930s and the attack on Pearl Harbor that plunged the United States into war on 7 December 1941, the critical demand for secure transmission of real-time battlefield communications brought the Native Americans to the forefront again.

On the reservation

Forced removal from their lands and relocation to reservations across the western United States rendered the Navajo and other Native American tribes generally isolated from the outside world. When news that the US was at war filtered through the tribal lands encompassing parts of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Colorado, the Navajo way of life was simple, ranching, sheepherding and subsistence farming in the shadows of the four sacred mountains that marked their territory.

In an effort to 'mainstream' the Navajo, young Native Americans were often educated in boarding schools where they learned the English language and were forbidden from speaking their own tongue. If any of them were caught speaking Navajo, they were severely punished and their culture was suppressed. Even as the US government sponsored these efforts, the Navajo people had little contact beyond reservation borders.

"We grew up in a world that was nothing but Navajo," remembered Charles MacDonald, a code talker with the 6th Marine Division. "Until I was nine years old, I didn't know anyone other than Navajo lived in this universe. So we did our thing, herd sheep, take care of the animals, raise cattle and farm."

Answering the call of duty, Native Americans volunteered for service and were also drafted into the military. For Frank Chee Willetto, a code talker with the 2nd Marine Division, the journey into the Marines began with a simple question.

"When I was drafted, a sergeant came up to me and asked if I was a Navajo," he remembered. "I said yes, and he told me to

"WERE IT NOT FOR THE
NAVAJOS, THE MARINES
WOULD NEVER HAVE TAKEN
IWO JIMA"

Major Howard Connor,
5th Marine Division

*In perhaps the most familiar
image of code talkers, these
two transmit a message from
the jungle of Bougainville*



come with him. I was sent to a Navy doctor for a physical, but it wasn't much of a physical because he only asked me a few questions. That's how I got to be in the Marine Corps."

Chee Willetto completed basic training in San Diego, California and then went to Camp Pendleton, where he met other Navajo Marines and learned that he would join a communications unit. "At that time I did not know we were going to use our own language. I later heard that the first 29 Navajo who volunteered had made the code, and I had to be taught it."

Rise to Service

Those original 29 Navajo code talkers were ushered into the realm of coded communication primarily through the efforts of one man, a civilian named Philip Johnston, whose parents were Christian missionaries and whose family had lived for years among the Navajo near the city of Flagstaff, Arizona. A US Army veteran of World War I, Johnston was one of only a few dozen non-Navajo people who were fluent in the Native American language.

During the early days of World War II in the Pacific, it became apparent that the Japanese were often able to decrypt sensitive American messages that were transmitted on the battlefield. After reading a newspaper article in Los Angeles, Johnston was aware that the army had staged large-scale manoeuvres in Louisiana in 1940 and 1941 and employed

Comanche code talkers. He quickly became convinced that the Navajo could do the same, providing security and saving precious time during combat zone communications.

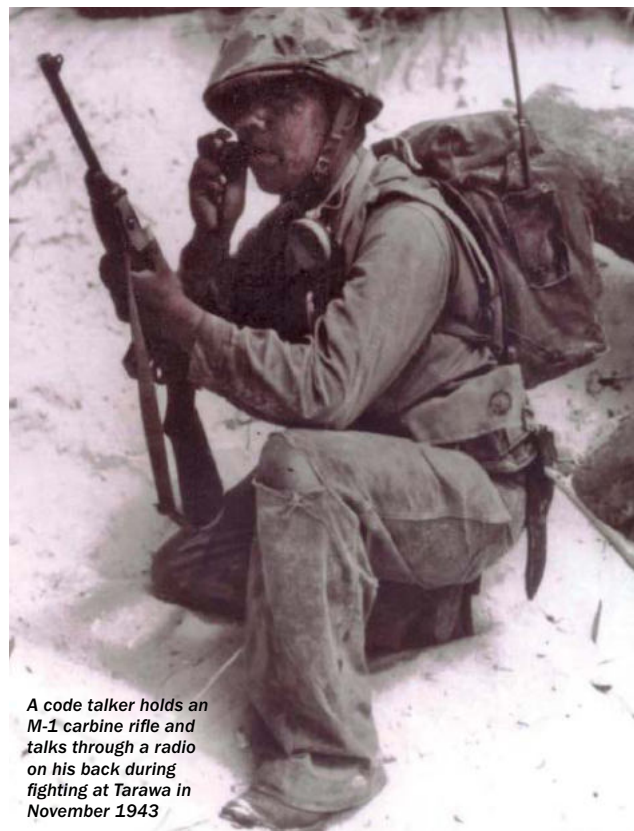
Johnston believed that the Navajo, one of the largest Native American populations, were also a better choice than other such peoples because of their relative isolation in the sparsely populated south-west US. Their language, therefore, was essentially pure in form and familiar to only those who were immersed in life on Navajo lands. The day after reading the newspaper article, Johnston visited the Navy offices in Los Angeles. After stating his case, he was directed to the 11th Naval District office and then to the Fleet Marine Training Center at Camp Elliott in San Diego, convincing Major James E Jones that his idea had merit. Johnston then wrote a letter, a comprehensive summary of his rationale, for the Navajo code talkers. He arranged a demonstration for 24 February 1942, less than three months after the Pearl Harbor attack, and recruited four Navajo men who were working in the Los Angeles shipyards to assist him.

Major General Clayton B Vogel, commander of the Amphibious Corps, Pacific Fleet, was a recipient of Johnston's letter. General Vogel read with interest that the Navajo language was largely "unwritten because an alphabet or other symbols of purely native origin had never been

"ROY PRESSED THE TRANSMIT BUTTON ON THE RADIO AND I POSITIONED MY MICROPHONE TO REPEAT THE INFORMATION IN OUR CODE. I TALKED WHILE ROY CRANKED"

Chester Nez, Code Talker, 1st Marine Division

Comanche code talkers of the 4th Signal Company, 4th Infantry Division pose with others in native dress at Fort Gordon, Georgia



A code talker holds an M-1 carbine rifle and talks through a radio on his back during fighting at Tarawa in November 1943



Above: Code talker Leslie Hemstreet bangs a drum during a moment of leisure on the island of Okinawa in the spring of 1945

compiled before." The civilian added that those people who became fluent in Navajo were only those "individuals who are first highly educated in English and who, in turn, have made a profound study of Navajo, both in spoken and written form."

Logically, observers would conclude that the Navajo language would be impregnable to Japanese decryption. Somewhat curiously, while the Marines invested in the capabilities of the Navajo to provide secure communications, the US Army's interest in such endeavours waned. Native Americans of the Chippewa and Oneida had also participated as code talkers in the army's Louisiana manoeuvres, and men of the Sac and Fox, Comanche and Pueblo tribes were also recruited, however, only a relative few men were fully trained and were therefore subsequently deployed to the Philippines and the European Theatre.

FORGOTTEN WARRIORS

CODE TALKERS OF THE CHOCTAW TRIBE HELPED TO TURN THE TIDE OF BATTLE DURING WORLD WAR I

"The enemy's complete surprise is evidence that he could not decipher the messages," wrote an excited Colonel AW Bloor of the US Army's 142nd Infantry Regiment, 36th Division. Bloor had just witnessed a successful assault against a strong German position called the Forest Ferme. He knew that Native American soldiers of the Choctaw tribe had played a significant role in the victory.

This action actually took place during World War I, and the first use of code talkers by the US Army occurred in the autumn of 1918 during the Meuse-Argonne Campaign. The Germans had been reading transmitted American communications with impunity, easily breaking existing codes. Other communication methods, including runners and carrier pigeons, encountered battlefield hazards and were often unsuccessful. By chance, an officer of the 36th Division began listening to two of his Choctaw soldiers converse in their native language, and an idea came to him.

Choctaw infantrymen were also serving in other regiments of the 36th Division, and within hours, eight of them were relaying orders in their native language, baffling any German who listened. 19 Choctaws were eventually identified and completed

a training course that involved the development of certain word combinations to describe the weapons of modern war, such as the machine gun – "little gun shoot fast." The group was dubbed the Choctaw Telephone Squad. Native Americans of other tribes, particularly the Comanche, also participated in the war effort.

World War I ended before the Choctaw could fully implement their new system in combat, but Colonel

Bloor noted that he was confident of its success. "It is believed, had the regiment gone back into the line, fine results would have been obtained," he wrote.

The code talker concept was destined to emerge once again, however, those who pioneered it were relegated to obscurity for many years.

Below: A group of Choctaws training to transmit messages coded in their language pose with an American flag during World War I



"THE GERMANS HAD BEEN READING TRANSMITTED AMERICAN COMMUNICATIONS WITH IMPUNITY, EASILY BREAKING EXISTING CODES"

Somewhat sceptical, General Vogel decided to test the code talker concept a few days prior to Johnston's demonstration. He ordered telephone links set up and personally wrote six messages that would be considered typical combat communications. Each of the messages was transferred swiftly and with great accuracy. One of them read: "Enemy expected to make tank and dive bomber attack at dawn." The Navajo translation read, "Enemy tank dive bomber expected to attack this morning."

Left: Dan Akee, a code talker from the Navajo Nation



During the Camp Elliott demonstration, the Navajo volunteers successfully translated messages from English to Navajo and back to English. However, they discovered that some of the military terms included in the messages were not part of the pure Navajo vocabulary. They would require the substitution of common words for previously unknown military terms. For example, "dive bomber" was eventually translated as "chicken hawk." The introduction of conversational Navajo had been only one part of the solution. A code would still need to be developed.

The demonstration was good enough for General Vogel and on 6 March 1942, he wrote to General Thomas Holcomb, the commandant of the Marine Corps, with the recommendation that 200 Navajo be recruited for the Fleet Amphibious Force to provide communications services. His recommendation read in part, "The demonstration was interesting and successful. Messages were transmitted and received almost verbatim... Mr Johnston stated that the Navaho [sic] is the only tribe in the United States that has not been infested with German students during the past 20 years. These Germans, studying the various tribal dialects under the guise of art students, anthropologists, etc, have undoubtedly attained a good working knowledge of all tribal dialects except Navaho [sic]."

Perhaps an awareness of Johnston's observation had something to do with the army's reluctance to expand its own code talker program, particularly since the war against Nazi Germany was primarily an army affair.

From code to combat

Despite General Vogel's recommendation, only 30 Navajo recruits were authorised. On 4 May 1942, the first contingent of future code talkers reported to Fort Defiance, Arizona. From there, they travelled by bus to the Marine Corps recruit depot in San Diego, arriving the following day for the seven-week basic training course. On 27 June, Platoon 382, comprised exclusively of Navajo Marines, was activated. In the coming weeks, they moved to Camp Elliott and developed the earliest form of the Navajo code under the watchful eye of Jones, now promoted to lieutenant colonel.

The initial code consisted of 211 words. In time, it was expanded to more than 400, and eventually at least 600 words made up the top-secret cipher. The new Navajo alphabet expanded from 26 characters to 44 within months. As the first group of Navajo demonstrated their proficiency in memorising the code and transmitting messages quickly under simulated combat conditions, the elapsed time of most communications from start to finish was only 20 seconds,

AMERICAN TRIBES

BRAVE MEN FROM NUMEROUS NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES PARTICIPATED IN TOP-SECRET CODE TALKER ACTIVITIES DURING THE WORLD WARS

NAVAJO

The most famous of the Native American code talkers, more than 400 Navajo served in the role during World War II. Their language was so pure and little known outside the culture that it was deemed an ideal basis for an unbreakable code, according to Philip Johnston, who conceived and supported the concept. Few veteran Navajo code talkers survive today.

CHOCTAW

Choctaw soldiers of the US Army's 36th Infantry Division served as code talkers on the Western Front during World War I. By 1918, the Choctaw were already known for their efforts to assimilate into American culture. In 1989, the French government honoured the Choctaw code talkers of World War I posthumously with the Knight of the Order of National Merit.

CHEROKEE

During World War I at the Second Battle of the Somme in 1918, Cherokee soldiers of the US 30th Division were under British command. These Native Americans were asked to send and receive messages in their own language to avoid interception and decryption by the Germans and became the first actual code talkers as documented by the division's signal officer.

COMANCHE

14 Comanche code talkers participated in the Normandy invasion on 6 June 1944. Assigned to the 4th Infantry Division, two in each regiment and the others with division headquarters, these soldiers landed at Utah Beach on D-Day and utilised a code of more than 100 terms. The French government honoured these Comanche with the Knight of the Order of National Merit in 1989.

SIoux

Members of the three major divisions of the Sioux tribe, including Lakota, Oglala, Standing Rock and others, served as code talkers in both world wars. Clarence Wolf Guts, the last surviving Lakota code talker, testified during a US Senate hearing in 2004, commenting, "I am full-blood Indian and we do whatever we can to protect the United States because we love America."

MESKWAKI

In January 1941, a group of 27 men of the Meskwaki tribe enlisted in the Iowa National Guard. Prior to American entry into World War II, eight received specialised training in communications using walkie-talkies and their native language. Among the first American troops to fight in the European Theatre, Meskwaki soldiers of the 34th Division landed in North Africa in November 1942.

a substantial improvement over encryption machines that required approximately half an hour for complete processing.

By July, the early days of the code talker program had been so successful that an additional 200 Navajo Marines were authorised for induction into the secret protocol. Although estimates projected that 1,000 Navajo could eventually be brought into the program, such a number proved ambitious. Some Navajo recruits or draftees were not qualified. Others were inducted into different branches of the military.

In the spring of 1943, after the additional 200 recruits had completed their training, another 303 Navajos were approved for the program at an absorption rate of 50 per month. That quota was reduced later to 25 per month. At its peak, an estimated 425 Navajo Marines participated in the program.

Philip Johnston, the catalyst for the development of the code talkers, offered his services to the Marine Corps with a request to participate directly in the program. On 2 October 1942, he joined the Marines with the rank of staff sergeant and initiated an intensive eight-week course, conducted after recruits completed basic training. The first of these began a month after Johnston's enlistment and the Navajo Communication School was formally established

at Camp Elliott in December. Johnston supervised the school and continued to provide the training, which he termed "extremely intensive," for the duration of the war.

The addition of three more Navajo Marines to the code talker program after the initial 29 had begun their training allowed three men to remain in the United States as instructors, while the initial contingent of trained code talkers was detailed to combat units. In the first major US ground offensive of World War II in the Pacific, the 1st Marine Division landed on the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons on 7 August 1942. 13 code talkers were assigned to the division, arriving on Guadalcanal within weeks of the landing. Other members of the original group of 29 were assigned to the 6th Marine Regiment and the 2nd Signal Company, 2nd Marine Division, reaching Guadalcanal in January 1943.

Action at Guadalcanal

The baptism of fire for the Navajo code talkers – and the code itself – was not long in coming during the seven-month fight for control of Guadalcanal. The Marines held positions defending Henderson Field, the island's vital airstrip and the Japanese tried repeatedly to overrun the American defences.

Chester Nez, a code talker with the 1st Marine Division, remembered vividly an encounter with the Japanese. Working as a two-man team with his partner Roy Begay, Nez

Below: Navajo code talkers rest during a lull in fighting on the island of Saipan in the spring of 1944



General Douglas MacArthur poses with members of the Pima, Pawnee, Chitmatcha and Navajo tribes



"THE DEMONSTRATION WAS INTERESTING AND SUCCESSFUL. MESSAGES WERE TRANSMITTED AND RECEIVED ALMOST VERBATIM"

Major General Clayton B Vogel, Commander, Amphibious Corps, Pacific Fleet, US Marine Corps

was on the front line with a radio while Marines were hotly engaged with the enemy.

"A runner approached, handing me a message written in English," Chester recalled years later. "It was my first battlefield transmission in Navajo code. I'll never forget it. Roy pressed the transmit button on the radio, and I positioned my microphone to repeat the information in our code. I talked while Roy cranked. Later, we would change positions.

"Beb-na-ali-trosie a-knah-as-donih ab-toh nish-na-jih-goh dah-di-kad ah-deel-tahi," Nez continued. "Enemy machine gun nest on your right flank. Destroy."

"Suddenly, just after my message was received," he noted with satisfaction, "the Japanese gun exploded, it had been destroyed by US artillery."

Nez survived the war. The last of the original 29 code talkers, he authored the book *Code Talker: The First And Only Memoir By One Of The Original Navajo Code Talkers Of WWII* and passed away on 4 June 2014 at the age of 93.

The Marines and the US Army troops that followed secured Guadalcanal, but it was only the beginning of the long, bloody trek to

the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945. Problems persisted with the program, particularly with the lack of available recruits, the need to build a 'dictionary' of military terminology for the code talkers to memorise and apply, and the emergence of 'quirks' in the code through dialectic and vocabulary preferences of individual code talkers that leaked into the cipher over time.

Nevertheless, during the course of the war the code talkers participated in virtually every major Marine amphibious landing and ground operation in the Pacific, including Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Bougainville, Peleliu, Saipan, Guam, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. They were never allowed to commit any of their code to paper. It remained alive only in their collective memory. It has also been said that code talker teams were constantly under guard by other Marines, who were to ensure that the Navajo men did not fall into enemy hands alive.

One report tells that a Navajo soldier who was not a code talker was actually captured by the Japanese during fighting in the Philippines. Tortured for information related to the code, the soldier told his captors only that he could

Right: Chester Nez poses for a photo during his deployment in the Pacific

not understand the messages himself. It was a true statement. Those few who knew only the Navajo language still could not decipher the code. The prisoner, who survived the war, later told a code talker veteran, "I never figured out what you guys who got me into all that trouble were saying."

Validation at Iwo Jima

The finest hour for the code talkers was during the horrific battle for the volcanic island of Iwo Jima, only 1,200 kilometres from Tokyo. The Marines landed on 19 February 1945, and the fight for Iwo Jima lasted more than a month.



SURVIVORS

DECADES AFTER THEIR HEROIC SERVICE DURING THE WORLD WARS, NATIVE AMERICAN CODE TALKERS HAVE RECEIVED RECOGNITION FROM THE US GOVERNMENT

Ironically, the success of the Navajo code talkers during World War II contributed to the long delay in recognition for the Native Americans whose contribution to victory remained classified until 1968.

While the Navajo have been the most recognised Native American code talkers and their exploits, popularised in such media as the 2002 feature film *Windtalkers*, have resulted in greater familiarity among historians and even their own people, other Native American code talkers have – at long last – received some acclaim.

After World War II, most Navajo returned to civilian life, farming and raising cattle. Others attended college on the GI Bill. One code talker

remained a Marine for 30 years. Initially sworn to secrecy, the Navajo encountered the old obstacles of racism and economic disadvantage but persevered.

Although recognition came slowly for the Navajo, Choctaw, Cherokee, Comanche and other Native American code talkers who served during both world wars, it gained momentum through the years. In 1971, President Nixon presented Navajo code talkers with certificates of appreciation. President Reagan declared 14 August 1982 as Navajo Code Talkers Day and also presented them with certificates.

In 2000, President Clinton signed the Honoring The Code Talkers Act, authorising gold medals for the original 29 Navajo code talkers and silver medals to other participants. Five of the 29 were present in the US Capitol rotunda on 26 July 2001 when President George W Bush presented the medals. President Bush further recognised all Native American code

Above: Dignitaries welcome Native American code talkers and other representatives to the US Capitol on November 20, 2013.

talkers on 15 November 2008, signing the Code Talkers Recognition Act. Gold medals were authorised for more than 30 tribes, presented in a ceremony at the capitol on 20 November 2013 and placed in the Smithsonian Institution. Each surviving code talker, aside from those Navajo already honoured, received a long overdue silver medal from a grateful nation whose understanding continues to increase.

"PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN DECLARED 14 AUGUST 1982, AS NAVAJO CODE TALKERS DAY"

A Code Talker watches the city of Garapan from an observation post, June 1944



“THE NAVAJO CODE WAS ‘THE SIMPLEST, FASTEST, AND MOST RELIABLE MEANS’ OF TRANSMITTING BATTLEFIELD ORDERS AND INFORMATION WHILE MAINTAINING SECRECY”

Captain Ralph J Sturkey of Headquarters Company, 5th Marine Division

During the first two days of combat on the island, Major Howard Connor, the signal officer of the 5th Marine Division, employed six code talkers simultaneously, all of who were working without a break or respite for 48 hours. The six men sent a total of 800 different coded messages, all without a single reported error and all were secure. Major Connor declared, “Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima.”

When the battle for Iwo Jima was over, Captain Ralph J Sturkey of Headquarters Company, 5th Marine Division, wrote his after-action report, describing the Navajo code as, “...the simplest, fastest and most reliable means” of transmitting battlefield orders and information while maintaining secrecy. Apparently some officers had continued to doubt the real worth of the Navajo code talkers. Sturkey followed up with a candid assessment that the, “...full value of the Navajo code talkers will not be appreciated until the commander

and staff they are serving gain confidence in their abilities.”

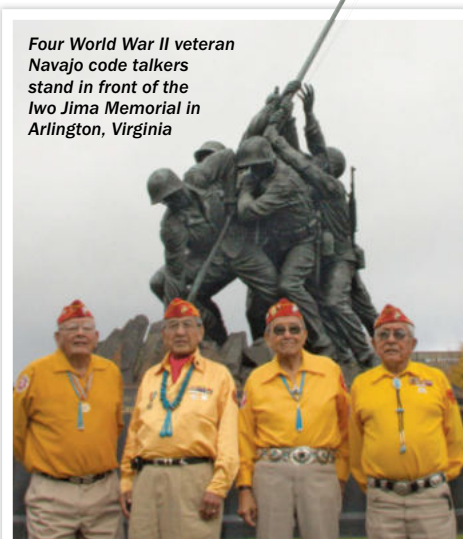
After the war, Lieutenant General Seizo Arisue, chief of the intelligence department and head of the 2nd Bureau of the Japanese Army General Staff, related that his cryptanalysts were routinely able to decipher other American battlefield codes during the Pacific War but could never crack the Navajo code.

Code talker twilight

After World War II, the code talkers were not permitted to discuss their role in the effort to defeat Japan. The code itself remained classified until 1968, a full 23 years after the end of the war. The Marines continued to utilize the Navajo code on a limited basis during the Korean War of 1950-53 and in the early years of the Vietnam War in the 1960s.

The veteran code talkers of World War II returned quietly to civilian life. Recognition from both the US government and the American

Four World War II veteran Navajo code talkers stand in front of the Iwo Jima Memorial in Arlington, Virginia

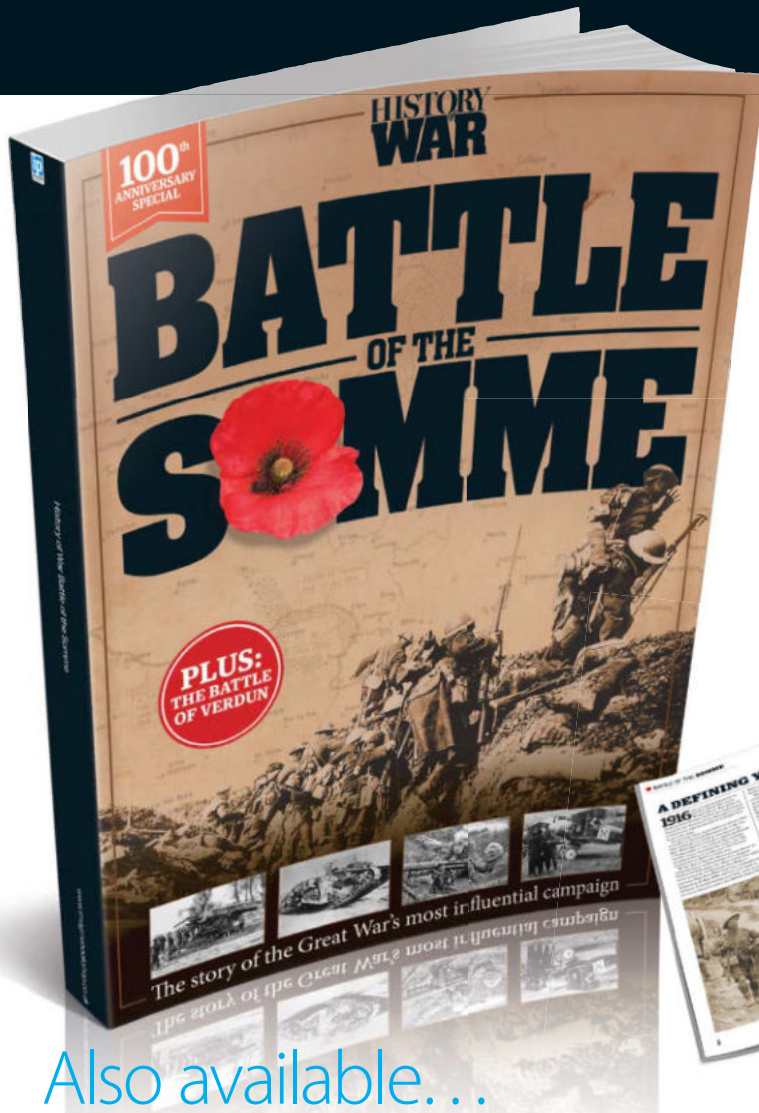


people came slowly; 50 years after these young Navajo men had risked their lives in service to a country that their code identified as “Ne-he-Mah,” or “Our Mother.”

The code talkers overcame incredible adversity to display dedication, ingenuity and raw courage in the discharge of their duties. In doing so, they recorded a heroic chapter in the proud heritage of the Navajo Nation.

Images: Alamy, Mary Evans

From the makers of **HISTORY WAR**

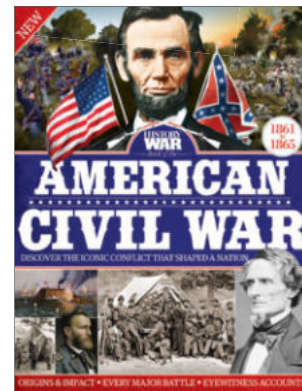
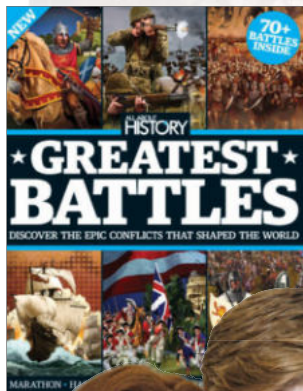


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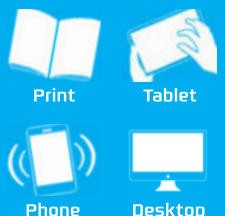
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REVIEWS

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Right: Sikh Khalsa's
cavalry on the march
to take part in the
Battle of Chillianwala



THE SECOND ANGLO-SIKH WAR

Written by: Amarpal Singh Publisher: Amberley Price: £25 Released: Out now

THE BOOK TO BRING TO LIFE ONE OF BRITAIN'S FORGOTTEN IMPERIAL WARS
– AND THE PEOPLE IT WAS FOUGHT AGAINST

There is a sure way for the prospective reader to tell if this is a book for him or her. If the reader already knew that there was a first Anglo-Sikh War, then Amarpal Singh's magisterial study of the second phase of the conflict between the British and Sikh empires is perfect: authoritative, thorough and balanced throughout its judgements.

However, if the prospective reader was previously unaware that there had been a first, let alone a second, Anglo-Sikh war, then he or she might find the book's 502 pages of very small type a little hard going. That would be a shame, as this is military history at its best.

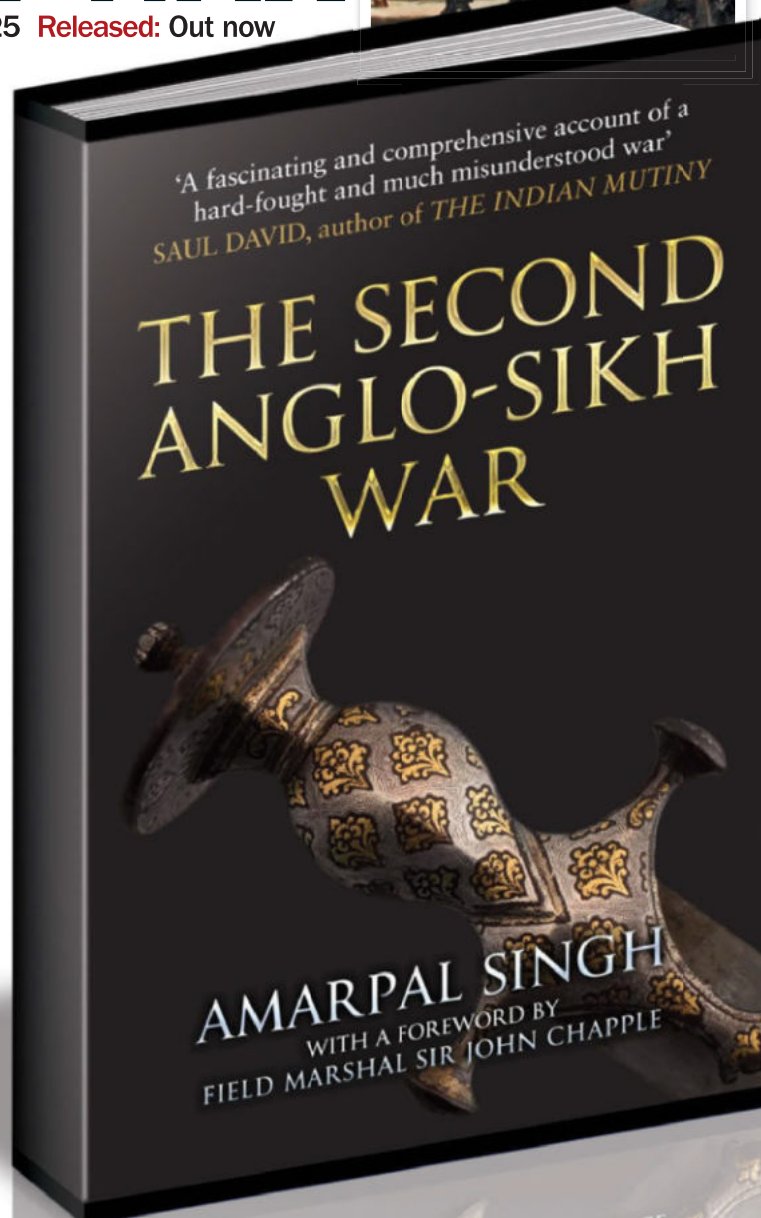
So, to get up to speed on the time, some quick preliminary reading certainly wouldn't go amiss. There is the author's excellent, and shorter, *First Anglo-Sikh War*. But for a thoroughly scurrilous take on the personalities involved, George MacDonald Fraser's *Flashman And The Mountain Of Light* will introduce some of the key people and wet the appetite for more on the final conflict that gave the British control of the Indian sub-continent.

Singh's book is a more sober account of the war, but it's particularly to be commended for its even-handed assessment of the participants in the conflict: the author is a Sikh now living in London and, as such, is comfortable with the manifold failings of both sides, as well as the evident bravery of so many of the participants, whether Sikh or British.

War is politics and stupidity worked out in the wasting of men's lives – and there is bullheadedness and cupidity aplenty in the lead up to the war – but in the crucible of battle, courage, determination and perseverance in the face of the impossible are revealed, sometimes in the most unexpected places.

War reveals what we are: the best as well as the worst, and in this definitive book, Amarpal Singh holds a clear mirror up to our shared Anglo-Sikh history.

"SINGH'S BOOK IS A MORE SOBER ACCOUNT OF THE WAR, BUT IT'S PARTICULARLY TO BE COMMENDED FOR ITS EVEN-HANDED ASSESSMENT OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFLICT"



FIGHTING WITH ALLIES

AMERICA AND BRITAIN IN PEACE AND WAR

Written by: Robin Renwick Publisher: Biteback Publishing Price: £25 Released: Out now

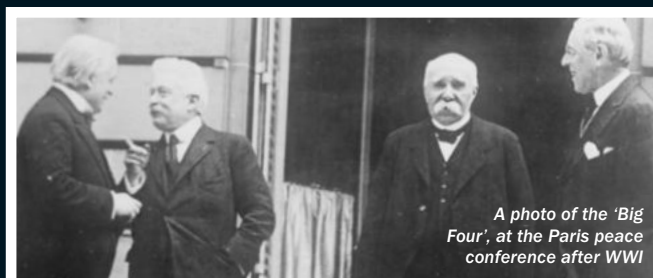
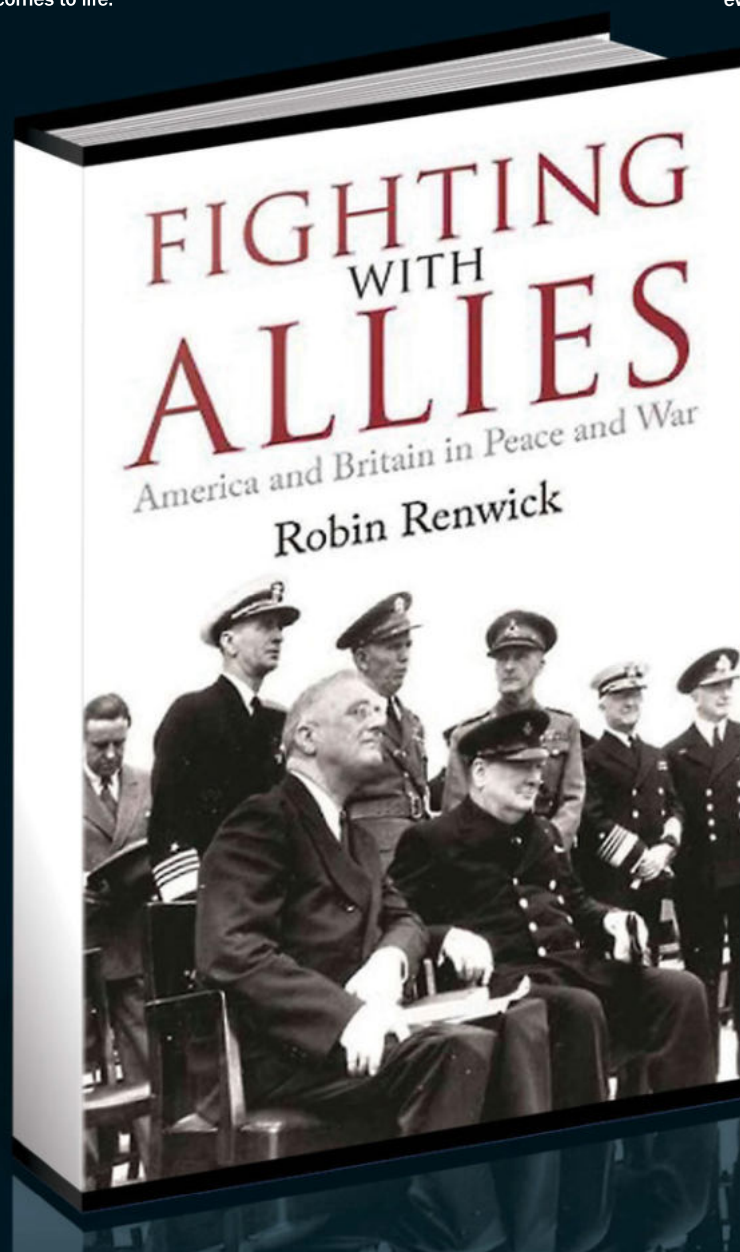
AN UNEVEN LOOK AT THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP, BUT ONE THAT STILL HAS THE ABILITY TO SURPRISE

Robin Renwick was Britain's ambassador to the United States from 1991 to 1995 and so has a unique insight into their 'special relationship'. This book looks into the formation of that relationship and considers the many strains and crises it has had to endure over the years.

Renwick's work is strongest when he is reporting on events that he himself was a part of. Working at the British Embassy in Washington in the 1980s, Renwick was present at some of the key meetings in the build-up to the Falklands War and his writing on this subject has an immediacy and depth of understanding that makes reading it truly riveting – this is where the book really comes to life.

His work is on less sure ground when considering earlier issues. The coverage of WWI and WWII, for instance, is familiar and the book would probably have worked better by focusing more on the periods when Renwick was an eyewitness. The background of the formation of the relationship could have been dealt with in an introductory chapter, having been covered so many times elsewhere. This would have allowed for more detail on events he had a hand in and would have made for a more consistent book.

Nevertheless, when offering personal insights on events he witnessed, Renwick is able to offer a new perspective and a fresh interpretation of familiar events, making this book, in its best chapters at least, truly captivating stuff.



A photo of the 'Big Four', at the Paris peace conference after WWI



Franklin D Roosevelt and Churchill at the Tehran conference in 1943

"WHEN OFFERING PERSONAL INSIGHTS ON EVENTS HE WITNESSED, RENWICK IS ABLE TO OFFER A NEW PERSPECTIVE AND A FRESH INTERPRETATION OF FAMILIAR EVENTS"

ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDED READING



BLITZED: DRUGS IN NAZI GERMANY NORMAN OHLER

Some of Hitler's
biggest decisions

during World War II were made while he was high on drugs. That's the astonishing findings of a new book by German author Norman Ohler, which reveals that drug abuse wasn't just restricted to the Nazi leader, but that it was rife throughout the Third Reich.

Blitzed begins in what Ohler dubs the 'Chemical Twenties' before Hitler came to power. These were the hedonistic days of the Weimar Republic, when Germany partied hard to forget the horror and humiliation of World War I. It was a time that also saw a boom in Germany's pharmaceutical industry, which was a leading manufacturer of both cocaine and morphine.

Already hard-wired to murder by years of propaganda and ideological education, many Nazi troops killed and died for Hitler's racist crusade while, literally, out of their minds. World War II is much documented, but Ohler's astonishing book sheds an entirely new light on the conflict.



STRANGE VICTORIANA JAN BONDESON

You can depend on
the 19th century
for a dip into
the sensational,

mysterious and macabre and *Strange Victoriana* does not disappoint. Full of detailed and gruesome illustrations and stories from the *Illustrated Police News* (known as the worst newspaper in England at the time), this book is an anthology of true-crime stories from the reign of Queen Victoria.

From medical disasters and women being buried alive to curious serial murders and dogs bearing witness in court, Bondeson brings together an eclectic mix of the most off-the-wall stories from an era that was characterised by strong moral principles and a strict social code of conduct. The tales contained within are intricately researched, presented through both the sensational headlines and original tabloid-esque drawings from the *Illustrated Police News*, and backed up (or indeed sometimes dispelled) with hard facts tracked down from many archives, databases, catalogues and libraries. The result is an intriguing image to peruse with often an even more fascinating story to read.

THE LAST RING HOME

Author: Minter Dial II **Publisher:** Myndset Press **Price:** £19.50

A DEEPLY MOVING ACCOUNT OF ONE FAMILY'S SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH

The Asian theatre of World War II has been well covered by historians and you might think there would be little more to discover about such infamous events as the Bataan Death March or Japanese POW camps. This book, by focusing on the impact the war had on one family, proves that there's always more to learn.

The author knew little about his grandfather and it was only a chance encounter, over the phone, that led him to take an interest in his story. Having the same name as his grandfather, Nathaniel Minter Dial was mistakenly contacted regarding a school reunion. He might have brushed this off as meaningless, but instead took it as a sign that he should try to learn more about a man he knew barely anything about.

Minter Dial II's father, Victor, had grown wary of talking to his mother about her heroic husband. He had barely known the man himself, having been just a toddler when his father had gone to war, and talking of him always seemed to send his mother into a state of melancholy. Victor's father, Lieutenant Nathaniel Minter Dial, graduate of the Annapolis Class of 1932, had died overseas and his story was on the verge of being lost forever before his grandson took up the cause.

Over decades of research, Minter Dial II fashioned what he admitted to being a "somewhat dry" biography of his grandfather, and he had doubts over how to proceed when the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, convinced him to share his research with his father. Victor, stunned by the amount of detail his

son's efforts had uncovered, became a passionate supporter of his continuing quest to find out as much as possible about Lieutenant Dial.

The result is this slim volume, which is anything but dry. The author has woven together interviews with survivors of Japanese POW camps, anecdotes from friends and comrades of his grandfather and the many letters sent between Lieutenant Dial and his wife, Lisa. What could easily have become sentimental remains, instead, touching and revealing. The steady unravelling of Lisa as she waited for a husband who was never to return is depicted with great sympathy, most effectively through her own letters, which are given added poignancy by the fact that many of them never reached Dial as he went through his personal hell at the hands of his captors.

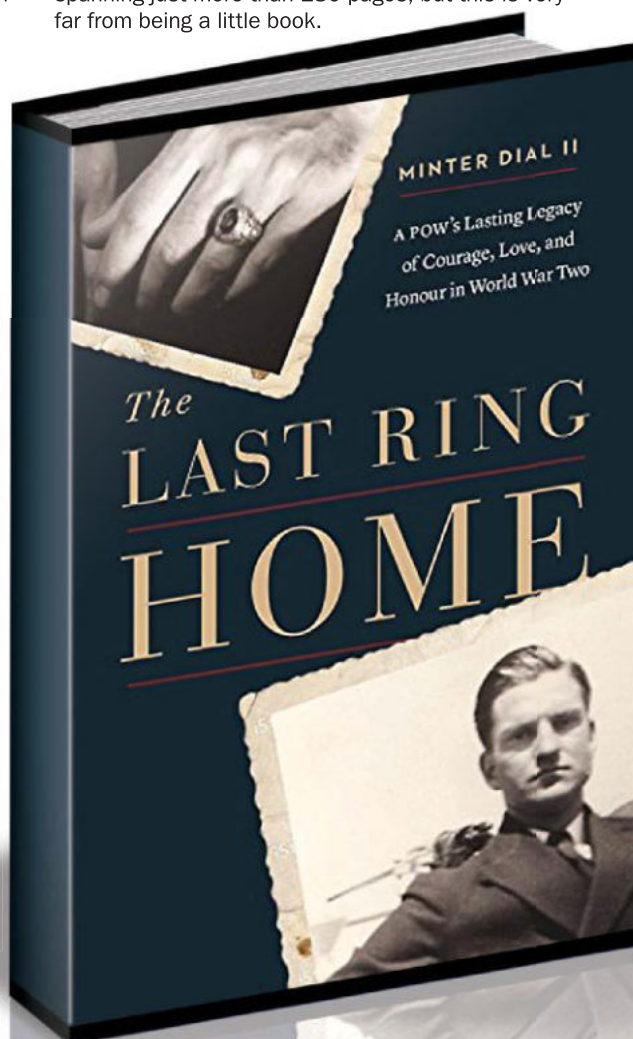
The suffering of the POWs is legendary, but still has the power to shock. The author makes no attempt to gloss over the realities of the torment they faced, nor does he pretend that every POW was able to endure the experience with sanity intact. That such a powerful story could have been so close to being lost forever is a reminder of the fragility of history.

The result of the author's endless energy and determination is a compelling story, with more than a few devastating twists. A brief tale it may be, spanning just more than 180 pages, but this is very far from being a little book.

**"THE AUTHOR MAKES NO ATTEMPT
TO GLOSS OVER THE REALITIES OF
THE TORMENT THEY FACED"**



Above: Some estimate that more than 20,000 Filipino and American POWs lost their lives during the death march



FORGOTTEN

Author: Linda Hervieux

Publisher: Harper

Price: £14.99

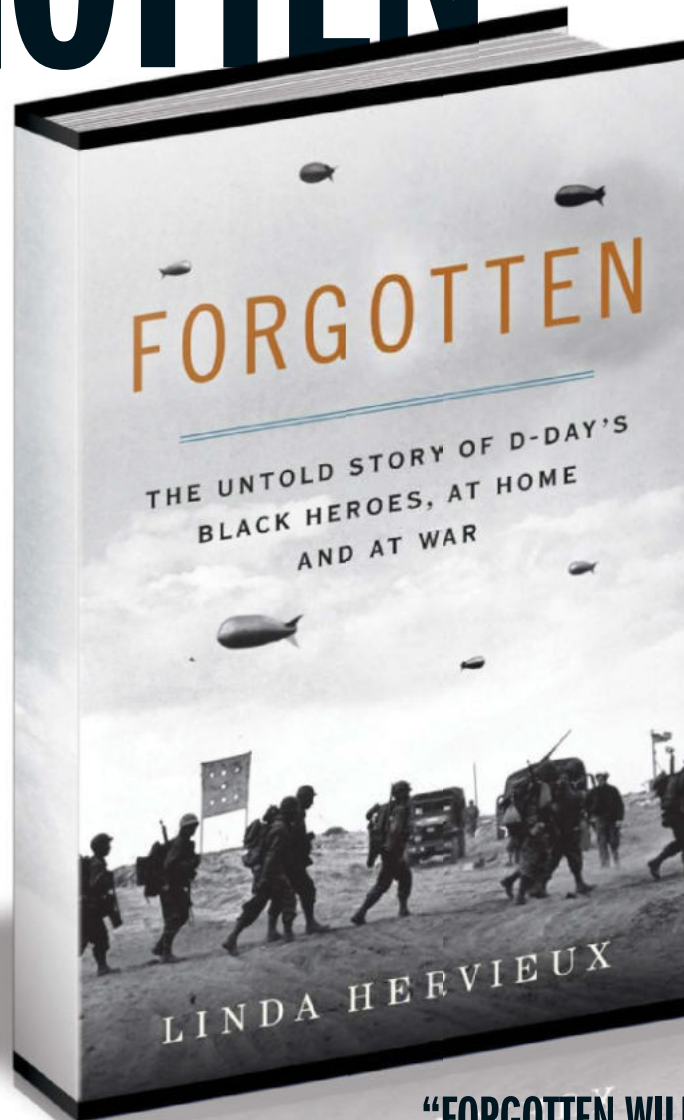
AN INSIGHTFUL MILITARY AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF AN OVERLOOKED BATTALION

We're not short of historical accounts of Operation Overlord, but this recent addition is a worthy chapter. *Forgotten* pays tribute to an all-black battalion, whose bravery and contribution has gone largely unrecognised even today. Journalist Linda Hervieux has tracked down the few surviving members of this unit of African-American soldiers and their families, and these personal accounts – combined with newly uncovered military records – create a narrative that is just as significant for cultural and political history as it is for military history.

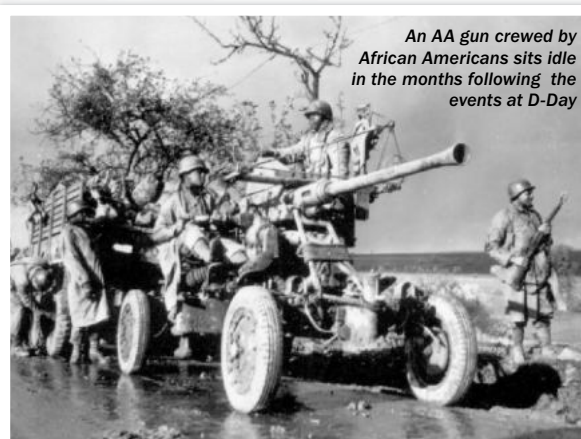
In 1940s Jim Crow America, the African-American troops were trained in Tennessee by hostile, southern white officers, as it was believed they would know how to 'handle' them best. This was where the 320th Battalion would master their weapon: the barrage balloon. Said to have been first pioneered during the 19th century, these armed deterrents threatened to blow-up low-flying enemy aircraft; as one private said: "If a Nazi bird nestles in my lines – he won't nestle nowhere else." You'll gain an education in these unusual lines of defence, floating above the blood-soaked beaches of Normandy, but more importantly, you'll learn about the soldiers who manned them.

Within the pages of this well-researched and deftly written book, we get to know a handful of their individual stories; the only regret is that there weren't more available at the time of its writing. One man was nominated for the Medal of Honor for his crucial contributions to D-Day, and yet he would never receive his award, as no African-Americans were given the nation's highest honour during the war. Incidentally, there is plenty of additional information about the members of the 320th on the author's website, along with photographs and an online petition to honour Waverly Woodson.

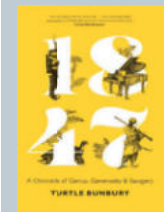
Forgotten will leave you moved, angered and enlightened about the racial divide in the Armed Forces. Along with uplifting accounts of how that contrasted with the hospitality of England and Europe, the reader gains an appreciation of the worldwide context and how these experiences added to the fledgling civil rights movement in America. It's a must-read for anyone who thinks they know all there is to know about that infamous day in history.



"FORGOTTEN WILL LEAVE YOU MOVED, ANGERED AND ENLIGHTENED ABOUT THE RACIAL DIVIDE IN THE ARMED FORCES"



ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDED READING



A CHRONICLE OF GENIUS, GENEROSITY & SAVAGERY
TURTLE BUNBURY

Surely such a name as Turtle Bunbury

tells of parental genius. Can the writer live up to his name? Almost. It's the story of a year, a year rendered significant for the author as the time when the building of his family home – a great pile of a place in County Carlow, Ireland – begun.

It's not perhaps the most obvious time to start such a project, as Ireland was in the midst of the Great Famine, but, as Bunbury shows in this book, such a year will reverberate through the world, setting off ripples in all sorts of unexpected places. He follows the year through, telling its history through the lives of people affected by the events that unfold.

This is both the book's strength and weakness. It's a chronicle, connected only by time. Indeed, it's all very witty and sharp, but what exactly is the point? If wit and sharpness are reason enough, then buy this book: it will delight.



PETER AND DAN SNOW'S TREASURES OF BRITISH HISTORY
PETER AND DAN SNOW

"We are blessed

in Britain to have such a rich and ancient collection of treasures... Collectively they tell us who we are. Where we are. How we got here." Peter and Dan Snow's *Treasures Of British History* is a collection of 50 such treasures – specifically of the written variety – that encapsulated, or steered, key moments in the development of Britain, from its days as an inclement group of islands under Roman occupation to its modern status as a major power on the world stage.

Treasures Of British History is the perfect coffee table book for any history fan; easily accessible and hitting the right balance between brevity and depth of detail with articles that are concise, insightful and delivered by authors that hold a clear passion for the documents and their place in British history.

"TREASURES OF BRITISH HISTORY IS THE PERFECT COFFEE TABLE BOOK FOR ANY HISTORY FAN"

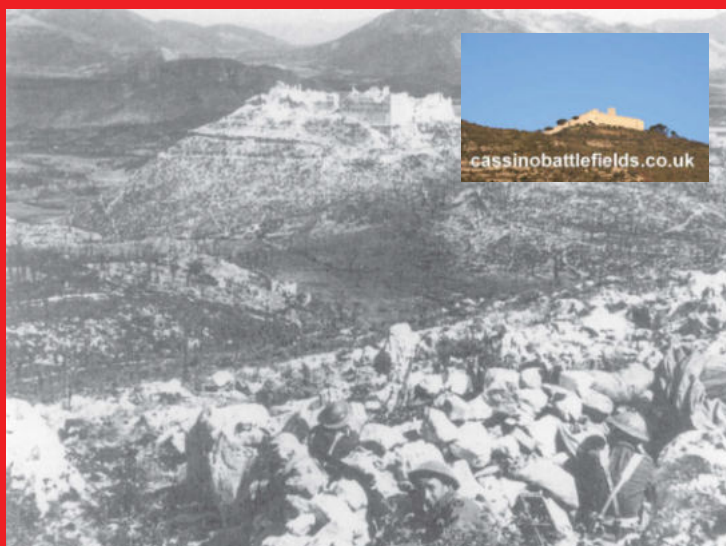


Photo: Men of 1st Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment up on Snakeshead Ridge overlooking the bombed Monastery at Monte Cassino Feb 44.

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Editorial

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Steve Roberts, Rob Schäfer, David Smith, Jodie Tyley

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NEXT MONTH FALL OF SINGAPORE

75 YEARS ON, DISCOVER WHAT LED TO CHURCHILL'S 'WORST DISASTER' AND WHETHER IT COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED



PRINCESS MARY GIFT FUND BOX

This small brass container was a royal present sent to all servicemen on the front lines during the most celebrated wartime Christmas in history

Christmas 1914 has become famous for its touching displays of humanity that were epitomised by the unofficial truces between enemy troops on the Western Front. For British soldiers, the festive season was also complemented by the arrival of a special present from a teenage member of the Royal Family.

Princess Mary was the 17-year-old daughter of King George V and took an early interest in servicemen's welfare. It was her intention that "every sailor afloat and every soldier at the front" should have a Christmas present and she endorsed and organised a public fund for gifts. £162,591 (almost £17 million today) was raised by October 1914, and the gift box was born.

Around 400,000 embossed brass boxes were delivered to servicemen for Christmas 1914, although more than 2.6 million were produced by 1918. Each box contained a Christmas card and a photograph of Princess Mary but the rest of the

contents varied. Smokers had tobacco and non-smokers could receive a writing case, while Indian soldiers were given sugar candies and a spice box. There were also a great variety of substitute presents such as chocolate, shaving brushes, scissors and even a pencil that looked like an unfired bullet.

The boxes became treasured possessions of servicemen and women alike, most of who kept them long after their contents had been used. Because the box was airtight, it was a useful container for storing small items such as photographs, money and papers. Consequently, many of these Christmas gifts were carried through the war and survived the carnage.

After the success of the Christmas gift box, Princess Mary (right) continued charitable work for servicemen with her mother Queen Mary and became a nurse in 1918

Right: Embossed with Princess Mary's monogram and hailing Britain's French and Russian allies, this particular gift box belonged to an Irish soldier called William Barry



"THE BOXES BECAME TREASURED POSSESSIONS OF SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN ALIKE WHO KEPT THEM LONG AFTER THEIR CONTENTS HAD BEEN USED"

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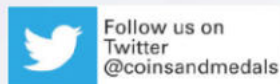
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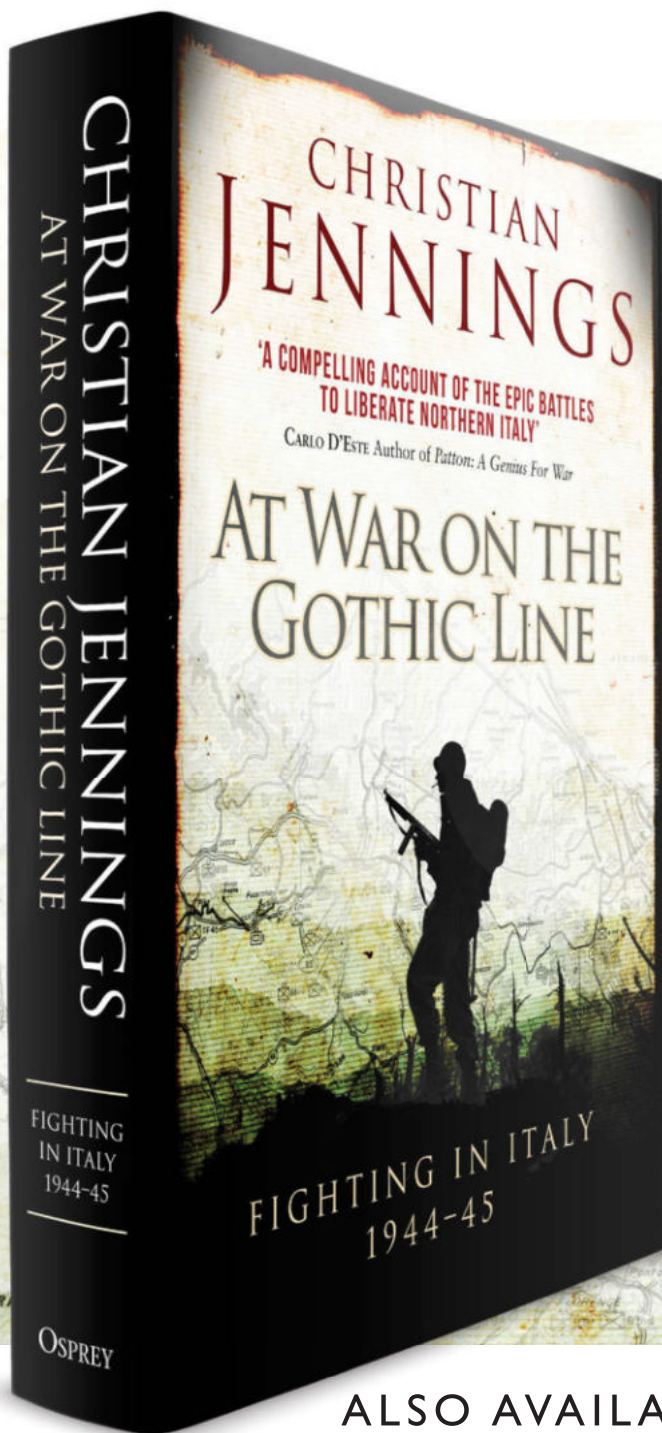
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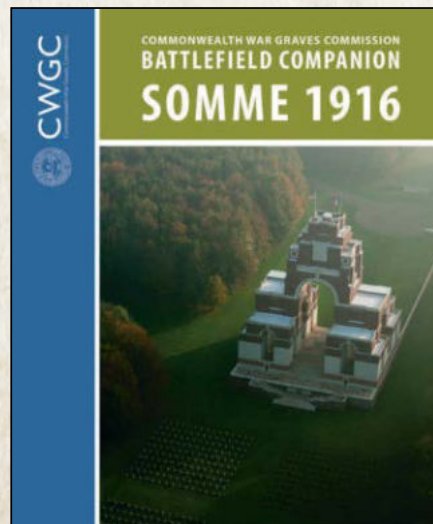
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